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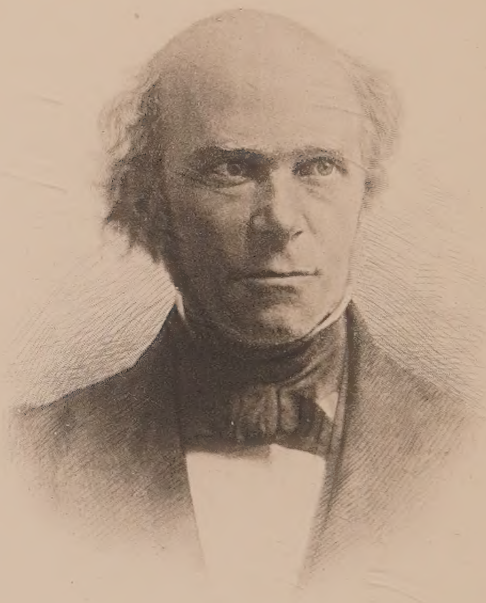
A DISCOURSE
OF
MATTERS PERTAINING TO RELIGION



Ætat. 42.

Theodore Parker.

A Discourse
of
Matters Pertaining to Religion

BY

THEODORE PARKER

EDITED WITH A PREFACE

BY

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON

If an offence come out of the Truth, better it is that the offence come than that the Truth be concealed. — JEROME.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The work entitled "A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion," best known colloquially as "Parker's Discourse of Religion" is undoubtedly the single work of Theodore Parker by which he will be most permanently remembered. This is, in the first place, because it was written in 1841, at West Roxbury, before he had become (Jan. 2, 1846) the minister of a great Boston congregation and a leader in the most important popular reforms. He had not yet known the trials and responsibilities of a city preacher, tempted at every moment to undertake collateral work. Although the basis of this book lay in five lectures, yet he was not called upon, while writing these, as in his Boston pulpit, to face each Sunday an ever new congregation, thus needing to repeat each week the fundamental elements of his faith. That both he and his readers thus prized the book is evident from the fact that it passed through four editions, three in America and one in England, covering a range of fourteen years, the fourth edition here reprinted being finally revised as he himself said "in the light of the theological science of the present day."

More than half a century has now passed since even that latest preface was written. The book which was even then severely denounced among the most advanced theological denominations is now viewed in a very different light. For this very reason it is desirable that the reproduction of it should be, as far as possible, literal, yet carefully revised and verified in all reasonable aspects, correcting only its few misprints or ac-

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cidental errors and thus leaving it to stand as absolutely as possible for the mind and conclusions of its writer.

The numerous notes, crowded with references beyond most theological works of its time, have been left unchanged, being only, so far as can be reasonably asked, revised and verified. To have done this verification with absolute completeness would have been wholly impossible. It can only be claimed that it has been thoroughly done as far as scriptural references are concerned and that it has met with some necessary limitations of time and strength in other respects. In this latest edition, especially, the range of the author's citations goes far beyond his own celebrated library which at that period had probably no rival in New England. In a multitude of instances, the volumes cited by Parker as authorities are not to be found in his own library as now transferred bodily to the great Boston Public Library and have to be sought elsewhere, if at all, and often without final success even in the Harvard Library.

The question curiously arises, where did Parker find his references? There were in the library of the Harvard Divinity School, in 1842, but 1800 volumes. Two of the largest private collections of similar books in or near Boston, were that of George Ripley — described with some detail in Frothingham's memoir of him, and finally sold at auction — and that of Convers Francis. These are now long since scattered in different directions, so that most of these books, which Parker doubtless used freely are not now found. It must, moreover, be remembered that during his first year in Europe, he met many eminent German scholars and inspected many libraries and from all this came

resources of citation, at least, quite beyond what the shelves of his library represented. The result is that the present editor has been obliged to content himself with following up and verifying enough of Parker's miscellaneous references to make it plain that his habit of accuracy was far beyond that of the average writer and that errors were accidental and rare. It is, of course, needless to those who knew Parker to point out that no such thing can be detected in the book as a wilful unfairness or a voluntary flinching from the truth as it stood before him.

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.

PREFACE.

TO THE FIRST EDITION

The following pages contain the substance of a series of five lectures delivered in Boston, during the last autumn, at the request of several gentlemen. In preparing the work for the press I have enlarged on many subjects, which could be but slightly touched in a brief lecture. It was with much diffidence that I then gave my opinions to the public in that form; but considering the state of theological learning amongst us, and the frequent abuse of the name of Religion, I can no longer withhold my humble mite.

It is the design of this work to recall men from the transient shows of time, to the permanent substance of religion; from a worship of creeds and empty belief, to a worship in the spirit and in life. If it satisfy the doubting soul, and help the serious inquirer to true views of God, man, the relation between them, and the duties which come of that relation; if it make religion appear more congenial and attractive, and a divine life more beautiful and sweet than heretofore — my end is answered. I have not sought to pull down, but to build up; to remove the rubbish of human inventions from the fair temple of divine truth, that men may enter its shining gates and be blessed now and forever.

I have found it necessary, though painful, to speak of many popular delusions, and expose their fallacy and dangerous character, but have not, I trust, been blind to "the soul of goodness in things evil," though I have taken no great pains to speak smooth things,

or say peace, peace, when there was NO peace. The subject of Book IV. might seem to require a greater space than I have allowed it, but a cursory examination of many points there hinted at, would require a volume, and I did not wish to repeat what is said elsewhere, and therefore have referred to an "Introduction to the Old Testament on the basis of De Wette," which is now in the press, and will probably come before the public in a few months. Some of the thoughts here set forth have also appeared in the Dial for 1840–42. I can only wish that the errors of this book may find no favor, but perish speedily, and that the truths it humbly aims to set forth, may do their good and beautiful work.

WEST ROXBURY, MASS.
7th of May, 1842.

PREFACE

TO THE FOURTH EDITION

It is now fourteen years since I prepared the first edition of this volume. In that time laborious Germans, some of them men of great genius, have investigated the history of the first and second centuries of the Christian Era with an amount of learning, patience, sagacity, and freedom of thought never before directed to that inquiry. Partly by their help, and partly by my own investigations, I have been led to conclude that the fourth Gospel is not the work of John the Disciple of Jesus, but belongs to a later period, and is of small historical value. This conclusion and its consequences will appear in some alterations made in this volume, which I have carefully revised in the light of the theological science of the present day. I know there are truths in the book which must prevail; the errors connected therewith I invite men to expose and leave them to perish, that the truths may the more readily do their work. I commit both to the justice of mankind.

Boston, Dec. 25, 1855.

"To false Religion, we are indebted for persecutors, zealots, and bigots; and perhaps human depravity has assumed no forms, at once more odious and despicable, than those in which it has appeared in such men. I will say nothing of persecution; it has passed away, I trust, forever; and torture will no more be inflicted, and murder no more committed, under pretence of extending the spirit and influence of Christianity. But the temper which produced it still remains; its parent bigotry is still in existence; and what is there more adapted to excite thorough disgust, than the disposition, the feelings, the motives, the kind of intellect and degree of knowledge, discovered by some of those, who are pretending to be the sole defenders, and patrons of religious truth in this unhappy world, and the true and exclusive heirs of all the mercy of God? It is a particular misfortune, that when gross errors in religion prevail, the vices of which I speak, show themselves especially in the clergy; and that we find them ignorant, narrow-minded, presumptuous, and as far as they have it in their power, oppressive and imperious. The disgust which this character in those who appear as ministers of religion, naturally produces, is often transferred to Christianity itself. It ought to be associated only with that form of religion by which those vices are occasioned."— Andrews Norton, *Thoughts on true and false Religion,* second edition, pp. 15, 16.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the world shows clearly that religion is the highest of all human concerns. Yet the greatest good is often subject to the worst abuse. The doctrines and ceremonies that represent the popular religion at this time, offer a strange mingling of truth and error. Theology is often confounded with religion; men exhaust their strength in believing, and so have little reason to inquire with, or solid piety to live by. It requires no prophet to see that what is popularly taught and accepted as religion is no very divine thing; not fitted to make the world purer, and men more worthy to live in it. In the popular belief of the present, as of all time, there is something mutable and fleeting; sometimes also which is eternally the same. The former lies on the surface, and all can see it; the latter lies deep and often escapes observation. Our popular theology is mainly based on the superficial and transient element. It stands by the forbearance of the skeptic. They who rely on it, are always in danger and always in dread. A doubt strongly put, shakes the pulpits of New England, and wakens the thunder of the churches; the more reasonable the doubt the greater the alarm. Do men fear lest the mountains fall: tradition is always uncertain. "Perhaps yes, perhaps no," is all we can say of it. Yet it is made the basis of religion. Authority is taken for truth, and not truth for authority. Belief is made the substance of religion, as authority its sanction and tradition its ground. The name of infidel is applied to the best of men; the wisest, the most spiritual and heavenly of

our brothers. The bad and the foolish naturally ask, If the name be deserved, what is the use of religion, as good men and wise men can be good and wise, heavenly and spiritual without it? The answer is plain — but not to the blind.

Practical religion implies both a sentiment and a life. We honor a phantom which is neither life nor sentiment. Yes, we have two spectres that often take the place of religion with us. The one is a shadow of the sentiment; that is our creed, belief, theology, by whatever name we call it. The other is the ghost of life; this is our ceremonies, forms, devout practices. The two spectres by turns act the part of religion, and we are called Christians because we assist at the show. Real piety is expected of but few. He is called a Christian that bows to the idol of his tribe, and sets up also a lesser, but orthodox idol in his own den. One word of the prophet is true of our religion — Its voice is not heard in the streets. Our theology is full of confusion. They who admit reason to look upon it confound the matter still more, for a great revolution of thought alone can set affairs right.

Religion is separated from life; divorced from bed and board. We think to be religious without love for men, and pious with none for God; or, which is the same thing, that we can love our neighbor without helping him, and God without having an idea of Him. The prevailing theology represents God as a being whom a good man must hate; religion is something alien to our nature, which can only rise as reason falls. A despair of man pervades our theology. Pious men mourn at the famine in our churches; we do not believe in the inspiration of goodness now; only in the tradition of goodness long ago. For all theological

purposes, God might have been buried after the ascension of Jesus. We dare not approach the Infinite One face to face; we whine and whimper in our brother's name, as if we could only appear before the Omnipresent by attorney.

Our reverence for the past is just in proportion to our ignorance of it. We think God was once everywhere in the world and in the soul; but has now crept into a corner, as good as dead; that the Bible was his last word. Instead of the Father of All for our God, we have two idols; the Bible, a record of men's words and works; and Jesus of Nazareth, a man who lived divinely some centuries ago. These are the idols of the religious; our standard of truth; the gods in whom we trust. Mammon, the great idol of men not religious — who overtops them both, and has the sincerest worshippers — need not now be named. His votaries *know* they are idolaters; the others worship in ignorance, their faith fixed mainly on transient things.

I know there are exceptions to this rule. Saints never fail from the earth. Reason will claim some deserted niche in every church. But wise men grieve over our notions of religion — so poor, so alien to reason. Pious men weep over our practice of religion — so far from Christianity. What passes for Christianity in our times is not reasonable; no man pretends it. It can only be defended by forbidding a reasonable man to open his mouth. We go from the street to the church. What a change! Reason and good sense and manly energy, which do their work in the world, have here little to do; their voice is not heard. The morality, however, is the same in both places; it has only laid off its working dress, smoothed its face, put on its Sunday clothes.

The popular theology is hostile to man: tells us he is an outcast; not a child of God, but a spurious issue of the devil. He must not even pray in his own name. His duty is an impossible thing. No man can do it. He deserves nothing but damnation. Theology tells him that is all he is sure of. It teaches the doctrine of immortality; but in such a guise, that, if true, it is a misfortune to mankind. Its heaven is a place no man has a right to. Would a good man willingly accept what is not his? Pray for it? This theology rests on a lie. Men have made it out of assumptions. The conclusions came from the premises; but the premises were made for the sake of the conclusions. Each vouches for the other's truth. But what else will vouch for either? The historical basis of popular doctrines, such as depravity, redemption, resurrection, the incarnation — is it formed of facts or of no-facts? Who shall tell us? Do not the wise men look after these things? One must needs blush for the patience of mankind.

But has religion only the bubble of tradition to rest on; no other sanction than authority; no substance but belief? They know little of the matter who say it. Did religion begin with what we call Christianity? Were there no saints before Peter? Religion is the first spiritual thing man learned: the last thing he will abandon. There is but one religion, as one ocean; though we call it faith in our church, and infidelity out of our church.

It is my design in these pages to recall men from the transient form to the eternal substance; from outward and false belief to real and inward life; from this partial theology and its idols of human devise, to that

universal religion and its ever living infinite God; from the temples of human folly and sin, which every day crumble and fall, to the inner sanctuary of the heart where the still small voice will never cease to speak. I would show men religion as she is — most fair of all God's fairest children. If I fail in this, it is the head that is weak, not the heart that is wanting.

BOOK I

"Who is there almost that has not opinions planted in him by education time out of mind; which by that means came to be as the municipal laws of the country, which must not be questioned, but are then looked on with reverence, as the standards of right and wrong, truth and falsehood were; when perhaps these so sacred opinions were but the oracles of the nursery, or the traditional grave talk of those who pretend to inform our childhood; who receive them from hand to hand without ever examining them? . . . These ancient preoccupations of our minds, these several and almost sacred opinions, are to be examined if we will make way for truth, and put our minds in that freedom which belongs and is necessary to them. A mistake is not the less so, and will never grow into a truth because we have believed it a long time, though perhaps it be the harder to part with; and an error is not the less dangerous, nor the less contrary to truth because it is cried up and had in veneration by any party."—Locke, *in* King's *Life of him,* second edition; Vol. I. pp. 188, 192.

BOOK I

OF RELIGION IN GENERAL: OR A DISCOURSE OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

CHAPTER I

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN MAN, AND THE EXISTENCE OF ITS OBJECT

As we look on the world which man has added to that which came from the hand of its Maker, we are struck with the variety of its objects, and the contradiction between them. There are institutions to prevent crime; institutions that of necessity perpetuate crime. This is built on selfishness; would stand by the downfall of justice and truth. Side by side therewith is another, whose broad foundation is universal love,— love for all that are of woman born. Thus we see palaces and hovels; jails and asylums for the weak, arsenals and churches; huddled together in the strangest and most intricate confusion. How shall we bring order out of this chaos; account for the existence of these contradictions? It is serious work to decompose these phenomena, so various and conflicting; to detect the one cause in the many results. But in doing this, we find the root of all in man himself. In him is the same perplexing antithesis which we meet in all his works. These conflicting things existed as ideas in him before they took their present and concrete shapes. Discordant causes have produced effects not harmoni-

ous. Out of man these institutions have grown; out of his passions, or his judgment; his senses or his soul. Taken together they are the exponent which indicates the character and degree of development the race has now attained; they are both the result of the past and the prophecy of the future.

From a survey of society, and an examination of human nature, we come at once to the conclusion, that for every institution out of man except that of religion, there is a cause within him, either fleeting or permanent; that the natural wants of the body, the desire of food and raiment, comfort and shelter, have organized themselves, and instituted agriculture and the mechanic arts; that the more delicate principles of our nature, love of the beautiful, the true, the good, have their organization also; that the passions have their artillery, and all the gentler emotions somewhat external to represent themselves, and reflect their image. Thus the institution of laws, with their concomitants, the court house, and the jail, we refer to the moral sense of mankind, combining with the despotic selfishness of the strong, whose might often usurps the place of Justice. Factories and commerce, railroads and banks, schools and shops, armies and newspapers are quite easily referred to something analogous in the wants of man; to a lasting principle, or a transient desire which has projected them out of itself. Thus we see that these institutions out of man are but the exhibitions of what is in him, and must be referred either to eternal principles, or momentary passions. Society is the work of Man. There is nothing in society which is not also in him.

Now there is one vast institution, which extends more widely than human statutes; claims the larger place in

human affairs; takes a deeper hold on men than the terrible pomp of war, the machinery of science, the panoply of comfort. This is the institution of religion, coeval and coextensive with the human race. Whence comes this? Is there an eternal principle in us all, which legitimately and of necessity leads to this; or does it come, like piracy, war, the slave-trade and so much other business of society from the abuse, misdirection, and disease of human nature? Shall we refer this vast institution to a passing passion which the advancing race will outgrow, or does it come from a principle in us deep and lasting as man?

To this question, for many ages two answers have been given — one foolish, and one wise. The foolish answer, which may be read in Lucretius and elsewhere, is that religion is not a necessity of man's nature, which comes from the action of eternal demands within him, but is the result of spiritual disease, so to say; the effect of fear, of ignorance, combining with selfishness; that hypocritical priests and knavinsh kings, practising on the ignorance, the credulity, the passions and the fears of men, invented for their own sake, and got up a religion, in which they put no belief, and felt no spiritual concern. But judging from a superficial view, it might as well be said that food and comfort were not necessities of our nature, but only cunning devices of butchers, mechanics, and artists, to gain wealth and power. Besides, it is not given to hypocrites under the mitre, nor over the throne, to lay hold on the world and move it. Honest conviction and living faith are needed for that work. To move the world of men firm footing is needed. The hypocrite deceives few but himself, as the attempts at pious frauds, in ancient and modern times, abundantly prove.

The wise answer is, that this institution of religion, like society, friendship, and marriage, comes out of a principle, deep and permanent in the constitution of man; that as humble, and transient, and partial institutions come out of humble, transient and partial wants, and are to be traced to the senses and the phenomena of life; so this sublime, permanent, and universal institution, came out from sublime, permanent, and universal wants and must be referred to the soul, the religious faculty and so belongs among the unchanging realities of life. Looking, even superficially, but with earnestness, upon human affairs, we are driven to confess, that there is in us a spiritual nature, which directly and legitimately leads to religion; that as man's body is connected with the world of matter; rooted in it, has bodily wants, bodily senses to minister thereto, and a fund of external materials, wherewith to gratify these senses, and appease these wants; so man's soul is connected with the world of spirit; rooted in God; has spiritual wants and spiritual senses, and a fund of materials wherewith to gratify these spiritual senses, and appease these spiritual wants. If this be so, then do not religious institutions come equally from man? Must it not be that there is nothing in religion, more than in society, which is not implied in him?

Now the existence of a religious element in us, is not a matter of hazardous and random conjecture, nor attested only by a superficial glance at the history of man, but this principle is found out, and its existence demonstrated in several legitimate ways.

We see the phenomena of worship and religious observances; of religious wants and actions to supply those wants. Work implies a hand that did, and a

head that planned it. A sound induction from these facts, carries us back to a religious principle in man, though the induction does not determine the nature of this principle, except that it is the cause of these phenomena. This common and notorious fact of religious phenomena being found everywhere, can be explained only on the supposition that man is, by the necessity of his nature, inclined to religion; that worship, in some form, gross or refined, in act, or word, or thought, or life, is natural and quite indispensable to the race. If the opposite view be taken, that there is no religious principle in man, then there are permanent and universal phenomena without a corresponding cause, and the fact remains unexplained and unaccountable.

Again, we feel conscious of this element within us. We are not sufficient for ourselves; not self-originated; not self-sustained. A few years ago, and we were not; a few years hence, and our bodies shall not be. A mystery is gathered about our little life. We have but small control over things around us; are limited and hemmed in on all sides. Our schemes fail. Our plans miscarry. One after another, our lights go out. Our realities prove dreams. Our hopes waste away. We are not where we would be, nor what we would be. After much experience, men powerful as Napoleon, victorious as Cæsar, confess, what simpler men knew by instinct long before, that it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps. We find our circumference very near the center, everywhere. An exceedingly short radius measures all our strength. We can know little of material things; nothing but their phenomena. As the circle of our knowledge widens its ring, we feel our ignorance on more numerous points, and the unknown seems greater than before. At the end of a toilsome

life, we confess, with a great man of modern times, that we have wandered on the shore, and gathered here a bright pebble, and there a shining shell — but an ocean of truth, boundless and unfathomed, lies before us, and all unknown. The wisest ancient knew only this, that he knew nothing. We feel an irresistible tendency to refer all outward things and ourselves with them, to a Power beyond us, sublime and mysterious, which we cannot measure, nor even comprehend. We are filled with reverence at the thought of this power. Outward matters give us the occasion which awakens consciousness, and spontaneous nature leads us to something higher than ourselves, and greater than all the eyes behold. We are bowed down at the thought. Thus the sentiment of something superhuman comes natural as breath. This primitive spiritual sensation comes over the soul, when a sudden calamity throws us from our habitual state; when joy fills our cup to its brim; at "a wedding or a funeral, a mourning or a festival;" when we stand beside a great work of nature, a mountain, a waterfall; when the twilight gloom of a primitive forest sends awe into the heart; when we sit alone with ourselves, and turn in the eye, and ask, What am I? Whence came I? Whither shall I go? There is no man who has not felt this sensation; this mysterious sentiment of something unbounded.

Still further, we arrive at the same result from a philosophical analysis of man's nature. We set aside the body with its senses as the man's house, having doors and windows; we examine the understanding, which is his handmaid; we separate the affections which unite man with man; we discover the moral sense, by which we can discern between right and wrong as by the body's eye between black and white, or night and

day; and behind all these, and deeper down, beneath all the shifting phenomena of life, we discover the RELIGIOUS ELEMENT OF MAN. Looking carefully at this element; separating this as a cause from its actions, and these from their effects; stripping this faculty of all accidental circumstances peculiar to the age, nation, sect, or individual, and pursuing a sharp and final analysis till the subject and predicate can no longer be separated; we find as the ultimate fact, that the religious element first manifests itself in our consciousness by a feeling of need, of want; in one word by A SENSE OF DEPENDENCE.* This primitive feeling does not, itself, disclose the character, and still less the nature and essence of the object on which it depends; no more than the senses disclose the nature of their objects; no more than the eye or ear discovers the essence of light or sound. Like them, it acts spontaneous and uncon-

* The religious and moral elements mutually involve each other in practice; neither can attain a perfect development without the other; but they are yet as distinct from one another as the faculties of sight and hearing, or memory and imagination. Perhaps all will not agree with that analysis which makes a *sense of dependence* the ultimate fact of consciousness in the case. This is the statement of Schleiermacher, not to mention more ancient authorities. See his Christliche Glaube nach der Grundsätzen der ev. Kirche. B. I. § 4, p. 15, et seq. in his Works; 1 Abt. B. III.; Berlin, 1835. Of course a sense of infinite as well as finite dependence is intended. Others may call it a *consciousness of the Infinite;* I contend more for the *fact* of a religious element in man than for the above analysis of that element. This theory has been assailed by several philosophers, amongst others by Hegel. See his Philosophie der Religion, 2d improved edition, B. I. p. 87, et seq., in B. XI. of his works; Berlin, 1840, B. XVII. p. 279, et seq., Rosenkrantz, Leben Hegels; Berlin, 1844, p. 341, et seq. See also Bretschneider, Handbuch der Dogmatik; Leip. 1838, Vol. I., § 12, 6. See Studien und Kritiken, für Oct. 1846, p. 845, et seq. for a defence of the opinion of Schleiermacher.

sciously, soon as the outward occasion offers, with no effort of will, forethought, or making up the mind.

Thus, then, it appears that induction from notorious facts; consciousness spontaneously active, and a philosophical analysis of our nature, all lead equally to some religious element or principle as an essential part of man's constitution. Now when it is stated thus nakedly and abstractly, that man has in his nature a permanent religious element, it is not easy to see on what grounds this primary faculty can be denied by any thinking man, who will notice the religious phenomena in history, trust his own consciousness, or examine, and analyze the combined elements of his own being. It is true, men do not often say to themselves, "Go to now. Lo, I have a religious element in the bottom of my heart." But neither do they often say, "Behold, I have hands and feet, and am the same being that I was last night or forty years ago." In a natural and healthy state of mind, men rarely speak or think of what is felt unconsciously to be most true, and the basis of all spiritual action. It is, indeed, most abundantly established, that there is a religious element in man.

CHAPTER II

OF THE SENTIMENT, IDEA, AND CONCEPTION OF GOD

Now the existence of this religious element, our experience of this sense of dependence, this sentiment of something without bounds, is itself a proof by implication of the existence of its object,— something on which dependence rests. A belief in this relation between the feeling in us and its object independent of us, comes unavoidably from the laws of man's nature; there is nothing of which we can be more certain.* A natural want in man's constitution implies satisfaction in some quarter, just as the faculty of seeing implies something to correspond to this faculty, namely, objects to be seen, and a medium of light to see by. As the tendency to love implies something lovely for its object, so the religious consciousness implies its object. If it is regarded as a sense of absolute dependence, it implies the absolute on which this dependence rests, independent of ourselves.

Spiritual, like bodily faculties, act jointly and not one at a time, and when the occasion is given from without us the reason spontaneously, independent of

* The truth of the human faculties must be assumed in all arguments, and if this be admitted we have then the same evidence for spiritual facts as for the maxims or the demonstrations of Geometry. On this point see some good remarks in Cudworth's Intellectual System; Andover, 1838, 2 vols. 8vo. Vol. II. p. 135, et seq. If any one denies the trustworthiness of the human faculties, there can be no argument with him; the axioms of morals and of mathematics are alike nonsense to such a reasoner. Demonstration presupposes something so certain it requires no demonstrating. So *Reasoning* presupposes the trustworthiness of *Reason.*

our forethought and volition, acting by its own laws, gives us, by intuition, an IDEA of that on which we depend. To this idea we give the name of GOD or GODS, as it is represented by one or several separate conceptions. Thus the existence of God is implied by the natural sense of dependence; implied in the religious element itself; it is expressed by the spontaneous intuition of reason.

Now men come to this idea early. It is the logical condition of all other ideas; without this as an element of our consciousness, or lying latent, as it were, and unrecognized in us, we could have no *ideas* at all. The senses reveal to us something external to the body, and independent thereof, on which it depends; they tell not what it is. Consciousness reveals something in like manner, not the human spirit, in me, but its absolute ground on which the spirit depends.* Outward circumstances furnish the occasion by which we approach and discover the idea of God; but they do not furnish the idea itself. That is a fact given by the nature of man. Hence some philosophers have called it an innate idea; others a reminiscence of what the spirit knew in a higher state of life before it took the body. Both opinions may be regarded as rhetorical statements of the truth that the idea of God is a fact given by man's nature, and not an invention or device of ours. The belief in God's existence therefore is natural, not against nature. It comes unavoidably from the legitimate action of the intellectual and the religious faculties, just as the belief in light comes from using the eyes, and belief in our existence from mere existing. The knowledge of God's existence, therefore, may be

* I use the word spirit to denote all the faculties not material — as distinguished from the body.

called in the language of philosophy, an intuition of REASON; or in the mythological language of the elder theology,* a REVELATION FROM GOD.

If the above statement be correct, then our belief in God's existence does not depend on the *à posteriori* argument, on considerations drawn from the order, fitness, and beauty discovered by observations made in the material world; nor yet on the *à priori* argument, on considerations drawn from the eternal nature of things, and observations made in the spiritual world. It depends primarily on no *argument* whatever; not on *reasoning* but *reason.* The fact is given outright, as it were, and comes to the man, as soon and as naturally, as the consciousness of his own existence, and is indeed logically inseparable from it, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves except as *dependent* beings.†

This intuitive perception of God is afterwards fundamentally and logically established by the *à priori* argument, and beautifully confirmed by the *à posteriori* ar-

* English writers have rarely attempted to account philosophically for the origin of the idea of God. They have usually assumed this, and then defended it by the various arguments. See Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Book I. ch. IV.; and Cousin's Psychology, Henry's Translation; Hartford, 1834, p. 46, et seq., and 181 et seq. See some valuable remarks in Cudworth's Intellectual System, &c., Vol. II. p. 143, et seq. See the Christian Examiner for January, 1840, p. 309, et seq., and the works there cited. See also the article of President Hopkins in American Quarterly Observer, No. II.; Boston, 1833, and Ripley's Philosophical Miscellanies, Vol. I. p. 40, et seq. and 203, et seq. Some valuable thoughts on this subject may also be found in De Wette, Das Wesen des Christlichen Glaubens, vom Standpunkte des Glaubens dargestellt; Basel, 1846, § 4, et ant. See too Wirth, die speculative Idee Gottes, Stuttgart; 1845, and Sengler, die Idee Gottes, Heidelberg; 1845.

† This doctrine seems to be implied in the writings of the Alexandrian fathers.

gument; but we are not left without the idea of God till we become metaphysicians and naturalists and so can discover it by much thinking. It comes spontaneously, by a law, of whose action we are, at first, not conscious. The belief always precedes the proof, intuition giving the thing to be reasoned about. Unless this intuitive function be performed, it is not possible to attain a knowledge of God. For all arguments to that end must be addressed to a faculty which cannot originate the idea of God, but only confirm it when given from some other quarter. Any argument is vain when the logical condition of all argument has not been complied with.* If the reasoner, as Dr. Clarke has done,† presuppose that his opponent has "no transcendent idea of God," all his reasoning could never produce it, howsoever capable of confirming and legitimating that idea if already existing in the consciousness. As we may speak of sights to the blind, and sounds to the deaf, and convince them that things called sights and sounds actually exist, but can furnish no *idea* of those things when there is no corresponding sensation, so we may convince a man's understanding of

* Kant has abundantly shown the insufficiency of all the *philosophical arguments* for the existence of God, the physico-theological, the cosmological, and the ontological. See the Kritik der reinen Vernunft, 7th edition, p. 444. et seq. But the fact of the idea given in man's nature cannot be got rid of. It is not a little curious that none of the Christian writers seems to have attempted an *ontological* proof of the existence of God till the eleventh century, when Anselm led the way. See Bouchitté Histoire des Preuves de l' Existence de Dieu depuis les Temps les plus réculés jusqu'au Monologium d'Anselme, in the Mem. de l'Acad. des Sciences Morales, &c. Tom. I. Savants Etrangères; Paris, 1841, p. 395, et seq., and his second Mémoire, p. 461, et seq., which brings the history down to that time. Tom. II. p. 59, et seq. 77 et seq.

† In his Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.

the soundness of our argumentation, but yet give him no idea of God unless he have previously an intuitive sense thereof. Without the intuitive perception, the metaphysical argument gives us only an idea of abstract power and wisdom; the argument from design gives only a limited and imperfect cause for the limited and imperfect effects. Neither reveals to us the Infinite God.

The idea of God then transcends all possible external experience and is given by intuition, or natural revelation, which comes of the joint and spontaneous action of reason and the religious element.* Now *theoretically* this idea involves no contradiction and is perfect: that is, when the proper conditions are complied with, and nothing disturbs the free action of the spirit, we receive the idea of a being, infinite in power, wisdom and goodness; that is infinite, or perfect, in all possible relations.† But *practically*, in the majority of cases, these conditions are not observed; men attempt to form a complex and definite *conception* of God. The primitive idea, eternal in man, is lost sight of. The conception of God, as men express it in their language, is always imperfect; sometimes self-contradictory and impossible. Human actions, human thoughts, human feelings, yes, human passions and all the limitations of mortal men, are collected about the idea of God. Its primitive simplicity and beauty are lost. It becomes self-destructive; and the conception of God as many minds set it forth, like that of a griffin,

* The idea of God, like that of liberty and immortality, may be called a *judgment à priori*, and from the necessity of the case, transcends all objective experience, as it is logically anterior to it.

† See Cudworth's Intellectual System, Chap. IV. § 8–10, Vol. I. p. 213, et seq.

or centaur, or "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," is self-contradictory; the notion of a being who, from the very nature of things, could not exist. They for the most part have been called atheists who denied the popular conception of God, showed its inconsistency, and proved that such a being could not be.* The early Christians and all the most distinguished and religious philosophers have borne that name, simply because they were too far above men for their sympathy, too far above them for their comprehension, and because, therefore, their idea of God was

* The best men have often been branded as atheists. The following benefactors of the world have borne that stigma: Thales, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophanes, and both the Zenos; Cicero, Seneca, Abelard, Galileo, Kepler, Des Cartes, Leibnitz, Wolf, Locke, Cudworth, Samuel Clarke, Jacob Böhme; Kant, and Fichte, and Schelling, and Hegel, are still under the ban. See some curious details of this subject in Reimmann's Historia Atheismi, etc.; 1725, a dull book but profitable. See also a Dissertation by Buchwaldius, De Controversüs recentioribus de Atheismo; Viteb. 1716, 1 Vol. quarto, and "Historical Sketch of Atheism," by Dr. Pond, in American Biblical Repository, for Oct. 1839, p. 320, et seq.

Possevin, in his Bibliotheca, puts Luther and Melanchthon among the atheists. Mersenne (in his Comment. in Geneseos), says, that in 1622, there were 50,000 atheists in Paris alone, often a dozen in a single house. (Biographie Universelle, Tom. XXVIII. p. 390). See some curious details respecting the literary treatment of the subject in J. G. Walch's Philosophisches Lexicon, 2d ed.; Leip. 1733, pp. 134–146. Dr. Woods, in his translation of Knapp's Theology (New York, 1831, 2 vols. 8vo.), in a note borrowed from Hahn's Lehrbuch des Christ. Glaubens, p. 175, et seq., places Dr. Priestley among the modern atheists, where also he puts De La Mettrie, Von Holbach (or La-Grange), Helvetius, Diderot, and d'Alembert. Such catalogues are instructive. But see Clarke's Classification of Atheists at the beginning of the discourse, in his works, Vol. II. p. 521, et seq.

The charge of impiety is always brought against such as differ from the public faith, especially if they rise above it. Thus Hicks declared Tillotson "*the gravest Atheist that ever*

sublimer and nearer the truth than that held by their opponents.

Now the *conception* we form of God under the most perfect circumstances, must form the nature of things, fall short of the reality. The Finite can form no adequate conception or imagination of the Infinite. All the conceptions of the human mind are conceived under the limitation of time and space; of dependence on a cause exterior to itself; while the Infinite is necessarily free from these limitations. A man can comprehend no form of being but his own finite form, which answers to the Supreme Being even less than a grain of dust to the world itself. There is no conceivable ratio between finite and infinite.* Our human per-

was." Discourse on Tillotson and Burnet in Lechler, Gesch. Englischen Deismus; Stutgart, 1841, p. 150, et seq. In 1697, Peter Browne, for a similar abuse of Toland, was rewarded with the office of a Bishop.—*Ib.* p. 195. A curious old writer says, "among the Grecians of old, those Secretaries of Nature, which first made a tender of the natural causes of lightnings and tempests to the rude ears of men, were blasted with the reproach of Atheists, and fell under the hatred of the untutored rabble, because they did not, like them, receive every extraordinary in nature as an immediate expression of the power and displeasure of the Deity." Spencer, Preface to his Discourse concerning Prodigies; London, 1665. Diodorus Siculus, Lib. 1, p. 75, (ed. Rhodoman,) relates an instructive case. A Roman soldier, in Egypt, accidentally *killed a cat* — killed a god, for the cat was a popular object of worship. The people rose upon him, and nothing could save him from a violent death at the hands of the mob. All religious persecutions, if it be allowed to compare the little with the great, may be reduced to this one denomination. *The heretic,* actually or by implication, *killed a consecrated cat, and the Orthodox would fain kill him.* But as the same thing is not sacred in all countries, (for even asses have their worshippers,) the cat-killer, though an abomination in Egypt, would be a great saint in some lands where *dogs* are worshipped.

* M. Cousin thinks God is comprehensible by the human spirit, and even attempts to construct the "intellectual existence" of

sonality * gives a false modification to all our conceptions of the Infinite. But if, not resting in a merely sentimental consciousness of God, which is vague, and alone leads rather to pantheistic mysticism than to a *reasonable* faith, we take the fact given in our nature — the primitive idea of God, as a being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness involves no contradiction. This is, perhaps, the most faithful expression of the idea that words can convey. This language does not define the nature of God, but distinguishes our idea of him, from all other ideas and conceptions whatever. Some great religious souls have been content with this native idea; have found it satisfactory both to faith and reason, and confessed with the ancients, that no man by searching could perfectly find out God. Others project their own limitations upon their conception of God, making him to appear such a one as themselves; thus they reverse the saying of scripture, and creating a phantom in their own image, call it God. Thus while the idea of God, as a fact given in man's nature, and affording a consistent representation of its object, is

God. Creation he makes the easiest thing in the world to conceive of! See his Introduction to the History of Philosophy, Linberg's Translation, p. 132–143. See also Ripley, Phil. Misc. Vol. I. p. 271, et seq. One would naturally think human presumption could go no further; but this pleasing illustration is dispelled by the perusal of some of his opponents.

* Zenophanes saw further into the secret than some others, when he said, that if horses or lions had hands and were to represent each his Deity, it would be a *horse or a lion,* for these animals would impose their limitations on the Godhead just as man has done. See the passage in Eusebius, Præp. Ev. XIII. 13, and Clemens Alex. Strom. V. 14.

The late excellent Dr. Arnold goes to the other extreme and says, "It is only in God in Christ that I can, in my present state of being, conceive any thing at all. (!) Life, etc.; New York, 1845, Chap. VII. Letter 61, p. 212.

permanent and alike in all; while a merely sentimental consciousness or feeling of God, though vague and mysterious is always the same in itself, the popular conception of God is of the most various and evanescent character, and is not the same in any two ages or men. The idea is the substance; the conception a transient phenomenon, which at best only imperfectly represents the substance. To possess the idea of God, though latent in us, is unavoidable; to feel its comfort is natural; to dwell in the sentiment of God is delightful; but to frame an adequate conception of deity, and set this forth in words, is not only above human capability, but impossible in the nature of things. The abyss of God, is not to be fathomed save by Him who is all-in-all.*

* See Parker's Sermons of Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology; Boston, 1853, Serm. I.

CHAPTER III

POWER OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT

Now this inborn religious faculty is the basis and cause of all religion. Without this internal religious element, either man could not have any religious notions, nor become religious at all, or else religion would be something foreign to his nature, which he might yet be taught mechanically from without, as bears are taught to dance, and parrots to talk; but which, like this acquired and unnatural accomplishment of the beast and the bird, would divert him from his true nature and perfection, rendering him a monster, but less of a man than he would be without the superfetation of this religion upon him. Without a moral faculty, we could have no duties in respect to men; without a religious faculty, no duties in respect of God. The fonudation of each is in man, not out of him. If man have not a religious element in his nature, miraculous or other "revelations" can no more render him religious than fragments of sermons and leaves of the Bible can make a lamb religious when mixed and eaten with its daily food. The law, the duty, and the destiny of man, as of all God's creatures, are writ in himself, and by the Almighty's hand.* The religious ele-

* See the treatise of Cicero on the foundation of duties in the essay De Legibus, Lib. I. It may surprise some men that a Pagan should come at the truth which lies at the bottom of all moral obligation, while so many Christian moralists have shot wide of the mark. See the discussion of the same subject, and a very different conclusion, in Paley's Moral Philosophy, and Dymond's Essays. See the heathen witnesses collected in Taylor, Elements of the Civil Law; Lond. 1786, p. 100, et seq.

ment existing within us, and this alone, renders religion the duty, the privilege, and the welfare of mankind. Thus religion is not a superinduction upon the race, as some would make it appear; not an after-thought of God interpolated in human affairs, when the work was otherwise complete; but it is an original necessity of our nature; the religious element is deep and essentially laid in the very constitution of man.

I. Now, this religious element is universal. This may be proved in several ways. Whatever exists in the fundamental nature of one man, exists likewise in all men, though in different degrees and variously modified by different circumstances. Human nature is the same in the men of all races, ages, and countries. Man remains always identical, only the differing circumstances of climate condition, culture, race, nation, and individual, modify the manifestations of what is at bottom the same. Races, ages, nations, and individuals, differ only in the various degrees they possess of particular faculties, and in the development, or the neglect of these faculties. When, therefore, it is shown that the religious sentiment exists as a natural principle in any one man, its existence in all other men, that are, were, or shall be, follows unavoidably from the unity of human nature.

Again, the universality of the religious element is confirmed by historical arguments, which also have some force. We discover religious phenomena in all lands, wherever man has advanced above the primitive condition of mere animal wildness. Of course there must have been a period in his development when the religious faculties had not come to conscious activity: but after that state of spiritual infancy is passed by, religious

emotions appear in the rudest, and most civilized state; among the cannibals of New Zealand, and the refined voluptuaries of old Babylon; in the Esquimaux fisherman and the Parisian philosopher. The subsequent history of men shows no period in which these phenomena do not appear; man worships, feels dependence, and accountability, religious fear or hope, and give signs of these spiritual emotions all the world over. No nation with fire and garments has been found so savage that they have not attained this; none so refined as to outgrow it. The widest observation, therefore as well as a philosophical deduction from the nature of man, warrants the conclusion that this sentiment is universal.*

But at first glance there are some apparent exceptions to this rule. A few persons from time to time arise and claim the name of atheist. But even these admit they feel this religious tendency; they acknowledge a sense of dependence, which they refer, not to the sound action of a natural element in their constitution, but to a disease thereof, to the influence of culture, or the instruction of their nurses, and count it an obstinate disease of their mind, or else a prejudice, early imbibed and not easily removed.† Even if some one could be found who denied that he ever felt any religious emotion whatever, however feebly — this would prove nothing against the universality of its ex-

*Empirical observation alone would not teach the *universality* of this element, unless it were detected *in each man,* for a generalization can never go beyond the facts it embraces; but observation, so far as it goes, confirms the abstract conclusion which we reach independent of observation.

† See Hume's Natural History of Religion, Introduction. Essays; Lond. 1822, Vol. II. p. 379.

istence, and no more against the general rule of its manifestation, than the rare fact of a child born with a single arm proves against the general rule, that man by nature has two arms.*

Again, travelers tell us some nations with considerable civilization, have no God, no priests, no worship, and therefore give no sign of the existence of the religious element in them. Admitting they state a fact, we are not to conclude the religious element is wanting in the savages; only that they, like infants, have not attained the proper stage, when we could discover signs of its action. But these travelers are often mistaken.† Their observations have, in such cases,

* One of the most remarkable atheists of the present day is M. Comte, author of the valuable and sometimes profound work Cours de Philosophie positive; Paris, 1830–42, 6 vols. 8vo. He glories in the name, but in many places gives evidence of the religious element existing in him, in no small power. See Cudworth's Intellectual System, etc., Ch. IV. § 1–5. Some one says, "No man is a consistent Atheist — if such be possible — who admits the existence of any general law."

† It seems surprising that so acute a philosopher as Locke (Essays, B. I. ch. 4, § 8) should *prove a negative by hearsay*, and assert on such evidence as Rhoe, Jo. de Léry, Martiniére, Torry, Ovington, etc., that there were "whole nations amongst whom there was to be found no notion of a God, no religion." See the able remarks of his friend Shaftesbury — who is most unrighteously reckoned a speculative enemy to religion — against this opinion, in his Characteristics; Lond. 1758, Vol. IV. p. 81, et seq. 8th Letter to a Student, etc. Steller declares the Kamschatkans have no idea of a Supreme Being, yet gives an account of their mythology! See Pritchard, Researches into the Physical History of Mankind; Lond. 1841, et seq. Vol. IV. p. 499. So intelligent a writer as Mr. Norton says that "*in the popular religion of the Greeks and Romans there was no recognition of God,*" Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels; Boston, 1837, et seq. Vol. III. p. 13. This example shows the caution with which we are to read less exact writers who deny that certain savages have any religion. See examples of this sort collected, for a different purpose, in Monboddo,

been superficial, made with but a slight knowledge of the manners and customs of the nation they treat. And, besides, their prejudice blinded their eyes. They looked for a regular worship, doctrines of religion, priests, temples, images, forms, and ceremonies. But there is one stage of religious consciousness in which none of these signs appear; and yet the religious element is at its work. The travelers, not finding the usual signs of worship, denied the existence of worship itself, and even of any religious consciousness in the nation. But if they had found a people ignorant of cookery and without the implements of that art, it would be quite as wise to conclude from this negative testimony, that the nation never ate nor drank. On such evidence, the early Christians were convicted of atheism by the pagans and subsequently the pagans by the Christians.*

Origin and Progress of Language, 2d Ed.; Edinburgh, 1774, Vol. I. book II. chap. III. where see *much more evidence to show that races of men exist with tails.* Some writers seem to think Christianity is never safe until they have shown, as they fancy, that man cannot, by the natural exercise of his faculties, attain a knowledge of even the simplest and most obvious religious truths. Some foolish books have been based on this idea, which is yet the staple of many sermons. See on this head the valuable remarks of M. Comte ubi supra, Vol. V. p. 32, et seq.

It is not long since the whole nation of the Chinese were accused of Atheism, and that by writers so respectable as Le Pere de Sainte Marie, and Le Père Longobardi. See, who will, Leibnitz's refutation of the charge, Opp. ed. Dutens, Vol. IV. Part 1, p. 170, et seq.

* Winslow, with others, at first declared the American Indians had no religion or knowledge of God, but he afterwards corrected his mistake. See Francis's Life of Eliot, p. 32, et seq. See also Catlin's Letters, etc., on the North American Indians; New York, 1841, Vol. I. p. 156. Even Meiners, Kritische Geschichte der Religionen, Vol. I. p. 11, 12, admits there is no nation without religious observances. See in Pritchard, l. c. Vol. I. p. 188, the statements relative to the Esquimaux, and

There is still one other case of apparent exception to the rule. Some persons have been found, who, in early childhood were separated from human society and grew up towards the years of maturity in an isolated state, having no contact with their fellow-mortals. These give no signs of any religious element in their nature. But other universal faculties of the race, the tendency to laugh, and to speak articulate words, give quite as little sign of their existence.* Yet when these unfortunate persons are exposed to the ordinary influence of life, the religious, like other faculties, does its work. Hence we may conclude it existed, though dormant until the proper conditions of its development were supplied.

These three apparent exceptions serve only to confirm the rule that the religious sentiment, like the power of attention, thought, and love, is universal in the race. Yet it is plain that there was a period in which the primitive wild man, without language or self-consciousness, gave no sign of any religious faculty at all, still the original element lay in this baby-man.

his correction of the erroneous and ill-natured accounts of others. If any nation is destitute of religious opinions and observances, it must be the Esquimaux and the Bushmans of South Africa, who seem to be the lowest of the human race. But it is clear, from the statement of travellers and missionaries, that both have religious sentiments and opinions. The heathen philosophers, admitted it as a fact *universally acknowledged* that there was a God.

* See a collection of the most remarkable of these cases in Jahn's Appendix Hermeneuticæ, etc.; Viennæ, 1815, Vol. II. p. 208, et seq. and the authors there cited. Monboddo, Ancient Metaphysics, etc.; Edinburgh, 1779, et seq. Vol. III. Book II. Chap. I. and Appendix, Chap. III. Col. Sleeman's account of "Wolves nurturing Children in their Dens;" Plymouth, England, 1852. Windsor's Papuans, Lond. 1853. Capt. Gibson's communication to the American Geog. Soc. Dec., 1853.

However, like other faculties, this is possessed in different degrees by different races, nations, and individuals, and at particular epochs of the world's or the individual's history acquires a predominance it has not at other times. It seems God never creates two races, nations, or men, with precisely the same endowments. There is a difference, more or less striking, between the intellectual, æsthetic, and moral development of two races, or nations, or even between two men of the same race and nation. This difference seems to be the effect, not merely of the different circumstances whereto they are exposed, but also of the different endowments with which they set out. If we watch in history the gradual development and evolution of the human race, we see that one nation takes the lead in the march of mind, pursues science, literature, and the arts; another in war, and the practical business of political thrift, while a third nation prominent neither for science nor political skill, takes the lead in religion, and in the comparative strength of its religious consciousness surpasses both.

Three forms of monotheistic religion have, at various times, come up in the world's history. Two of them at this moment perhaps outnumber the votaries of all other religions, and divide between them the more advanced civilization of mankind. These three are the Mosaic, the Christian, and the Mahometan; all recognizing the unity of God, the religious nature of man, and the relation between God and man. All of these, surprising as it is, came from one family of men, the Shemitic, who spoke, in substance, the same language; lived in the same country, and had the same customs and political institutions. Even that widespread and more monstrous form of religion, which our fathers had

in the wilds of Europe, betrays its likeness to this Oriental stock; and that form, still earlier, which dotted Greece all over with its temples, filling the isles of the Mediterranean with its solemn and mysterious chant, came apparently from the same source.* The beautiful spirit of the Greek modified, enlarged and embellished what Oriental piety at first called down from the Empyrean. The nations now at the head of modern civilization, have not developed independently their power of creative genius, so to say; for each form of worship, that has prevailed with them, was originally derived from some other race. These nations are more scientific than religious; reflective rather than spontaneous; utilitarian more than reverential; and, so far as history relates, have never yet created a permanent form of religion which has extended to other families of men. Their faith, like their choicer fruits, is an importation from abroad, not an indigenous plant, though now happily naturalized, and rendered productive in their soil. Of all nations hitherto known, these are the most disposed to reflection, literature science, and the practical arts; while the Shemitish tribes in their early age were above all others religious, and have had an influence in religious history entirely disproportionate to their numbers, their art, their science, or their laws. Out of the heart of this ancient family of nations flowed forth that triple stream of pious life, which even now gives energy to the pulsations of the world. Egypt and Greece have stirred the intellect of mankind; and spoken to our love of the grand, the

* This Orientalism of the religious opinions among the Europeans has led to some very absurd conceits; see a notorious instance in Davie's Mythology of the Druids. See also La Religion des Gaulois, etc., par le R. P. Dom [Jacques Martin]; Paris, 1727, 2 vols. 4to.

beautiful, the true, to faculties that lie deep in us. But this Oriental people have touched the soul of men, and awakened reverence for the good, the holy, the altogether beautiful, which lies in the profoundest deep of all. The religious element appears least conspicuous it may be, in some nations of Australia — perhaps the most barbarous of men. With savages in general it is in its infancy, like all the nobler attributes of man,* but as they develop their nature, this faculty becomes more and more apparent.

II. Again; this element is indestructible in human nature. It is not in the power of caprice within, nor external circumstances, war or peace, freedom or slavery, ignorance or refinement, wholly to abolish or destroy it. Its growth may be retarded, or quickened; its power misdirected, or suffered to flow in its proper channel. But no violence from within, no violence from without, can ever destroy this element. It were as easy to extirpate hunger and thirst from the sound living body, as this element from the spirit. It may sleep. It never dies. Kept down by external force to-day, it flames up to heaven in streams of light to-morrow. When perverted from its natural course, it writes, in devastation, its chronicles of wrongs,— a horrid page of human history, which proves its awful power, as the strength of the human muscle is proved by the distortions of the maniac. Sensual men, who hate the restraints of religion, who know nothing of its encouragements, strive to pluck up by the roots this plant which God has set in the midst of the garden. But there it stands — the tree of knowledge the tree

* M. Comte takes a very different view of the matter, and has both fact and philosophy against him.

of life. Even such as boast the name of infidel and atheist find, unconsciously, repose in its wide shadow, and refreshment in its fruit. It blesses obedient men. He who violates the divine law, and thus would wring this feeling from his heart, feels it, like a heated iron, in the marrow of his bones.

III. Still further; this religious element is the strongest and deepest in human nature. It depends on nothing outside, conventional or artificial. It is identical in all men; not a similar thing but the same. Superficially, man differs from man, in the less and more; but in the nature of the primitive religious element all agree, as in whatever is deepest. Out of the profoundest abyss in man proceed his worship, his prayer, his hymn of praise. The history of the world shows us what a space religion fills. She is the mother of philosophy and the arts; has presided over the greatest wars. She holds now all nations with her unseen hand; restrains their passions, more powerful than all the cunning statutes of the lawgiver; awakens their virtue; allays their sorrows with a mild comfort, all her own; brightens their hopes with the purple ray of faith, shed through the sombre curtains of necessity.

Religious emotion often controls society, inspires the lawgiver and the artist — is the deep-moving principle; it has called forth the greatest heroism of past ages; the proudest deeds of daring and endurance have been done in its name. Without religion, all the sages of a kingdom cannot build a city; but with it, how a rude fanatic sways the mass of men. The greatest works of human art have risen only at religion's call. The marble is pliant at her magic touch, and seems to

breathe a pious life. The chiselled stone is instinct with a living soul, and stands there, silent, yet full of hymns and prayers; an embodied aspiration, a thought with wings that mock at space and time. The temples of the East, the cathedrals of the West; altar and column and statue and image,— there are the tribute art pays to her. Whence did Michael Angelo, Phidias, Praxiteles, and all the mighty sons of art, who chronicled their awful thoughts in stone, shaping brute matter to a divine form, building up the Pyramid and Parthenon, or forcing the hard elements to swell into the arch, aspire into the dome or the fantastic tower,— whence did they draw their inspiration? All their greatest wonders are wrought in religion's name. In the very dawn of time genius looks through the clouds and lifts up his voice in hymns and songs and stories of the Gods; and the angel of music carves out her thanksgiving, her penitence, her prayers for man, on the unseen air, as a votive gift for her. Her sweetest note, her most majestic chant, she breathes only at religion's call. Thus it has always been. A thousand men will readily become celibate monks for religion. Would they for gold, or ease, or fame?

The greatest sacrifices ever made are offered in the name of religion. For this a man will forego ease, peace, friends, society, wife, and child, all that mortal flesh holds dearest; no danger is too dangerous; no suffering too stern to bear, if religion say the word. Simeon the Stylite will stand years long on his pillar's top; the devotee of Budha tear off his palpitating flesh to serve his God. The pagan idolater, bowing down to a false image of stone, renounces his possessions, submits to barbarous and cruel rites, shameful mutilation of his limbs; gives the first-born of his

body for the sin of his soul; casts his own person to destruction, because he dreams Baal, or Saturn, Jehovah, or Moloch, demands the sacrifice. The Christian idolater, doing equal homage to a lying thought, gives up common sense, reason, conscience, love of his brother, at the same fancied mandate; is ready to credit most obvious absurdities; accept contradictions; do what conflicts with the moral sense; believe dogmas that make life dark, eternity dreadful, Man a worm, and God a tyrant; dogmas that make him count as cursed half his brother men, because told such is his duty, in the name of religion. In this name Thomas More, the ablest head of his times, will believe a bit of bread becomes the Almighty God, when a lewd priest but mumbles his juggling Latin and lifts up his hands. In our day, heads as able as Thomas More's believe doctrines quite as absurd, because taught as religion and God's command. In its behalf, the foolishest teaching becomes acceptable; the foulest doctrines, the grossest conduct, crimes that like the fabled banquet of Thyestes, might make the sun sicken at the sight and turn back affrighted in his course,— these things are counted as beautiful, superior to reason, acceptable to God. The wicked man may bless his brother in crime; the unrighteous blast the holy with his curse, and devotees shall shout "Amen," to both the blessing and the ban.

On what other authority have rites so bloody been accepted; or doctrines so false to reason, so libellous of God? For what else has Man achieved such works, and made such sacrifice? In what name but this, will the man of vast and far outstretching mind, the counsellor, the chief, the sage, the native king of men, forego the vastness of his thought, put out his

spirit's eyes, and bow him to a drivelling wretch who knows nothing but treacherous mummery and juggling tricks? In religion this has been done from the first false prophet to the last false priest, and the pride of the understanding is abashed; the supremacy of reason degraded; the majesty of conscience trampled on; the beautifulness of faith and love trodden down into the mire of the streets. The hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the tongue, the most sacred members of the body; judgment, imagination, the overmastering faculties of mind; justice, mercy, and love, the fairest affections of the soul,— all these have been reckoned a poor and paltry sacrifice, and lopped off at the shrine of God as things unholy. This has been done, not only by pagan polytheists, and savage idolaters, but by Christian devotees, accomplished scholars, the enlightened men of enlightened times.

These melancholy results, which are but aberrations of the religious element, the disease of the baby, not the soundness of mankind, have often been confounded with religion itself, regarded as the legitimate fruit of the religious faculty. Hence men have said, such results prove that religion itself is a popular fury; the foolishness of the people; the madness of mankind. They prove a very different thing. They show the depth, the strength, the awful power of that element which thus can overmaster all the rest of Man — passion and conscience, reason and love. Tell a man his interest requires a sacrifice, he hesitates; convince him his religion demands it, and crowds rush at once and joyful, to a martyr's fiery death. It is the best things that are capable of the worst abuse; the very abuse may test the value.*

* On this theme, see the forcible and eloquent remarks of

Professor Whewell, in his Sermons on the Foundation of Morals, 2d edition, p. 28, et seq., a work well worthy, in its spirit and general tone, of his illustrious predecessors, "the Latitude men about Cambridge." See also Mr. Parker's Sermon Of the Relation between the Ecclesiastical Institutions, and the Religious Consciousness of the American People, 1855; and that Of the Function of a Teacher of Religion, 1855; Sermons of Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology, 1855 Sermons III. IV. V. VI.

CHAPTER IV

THE IDEA OF RELIGION CONNECTED WITH SCIENCE AND LIFE

The legitimate action of the religious element produces reverence. This reverence may ascend into trust, hope, and love, which is according to its nature; or descend into doubt, fear, and hate, which is against its nature: it thus rises or falls, as it coexists in the individual, with wisdom and goodness, or with ignorance and vice. However the legitimate and normal action of the religious element leads ultimately, and of necessity, to reverence, absolute trust, and perfect love of God. These are the result only of its sound and healthy action.

Now there can be but one kind of religion, as there can be but one kind of time and space. It may exist in different degrees, weak or powerful; in combination with other emotions, love or hate, with wisdom or folly, and thus it is superficially modified, just as love, which is always the same thing, is modified by the character of the man who feels it, and by that of the object to which it is directed. Of course, then, there is no difference but of words between *revealed* religion and *natural* religion, for all actual religion is revealed in us, or it could not be felt, and all revealed religion is natural or it would be of no use.* What is of use to a man comes upon the plane of his consciousness, not

* This distinction between natural and revealed religion is very old; at least as old as the time or Origen. But it is evidently a distinction in *form* not in *substance*. The terms

merely above it, or below it. We may regard religion from different points of view, and give corresponding names to our partial conceptions, which we have purposely limited, and so to speak of natural and revealed religion; Monotheistic, Polytheistic, or Pantheistic, Pagan, Jewish, Christian, Mahometan religion. But in these cases the distinction, indicated by the terms, belongs to the thinker's mind, not to religion itself, the object of thought. Historical phenomena of religion vary in the more and less. Some express it purely and beautifully; others mingle foreign emotions with it, and but feebly represent the pious feeling.

To determine the question what is absolute, that is perfect religion,— religion with no limitation, we are not to gather to a focus the scattered rays of all the various forms under which religion has appeared, in history, for we can never collect the absolute from any number of imperfect phenomena; and, besides, in making the search and forming an eclecticism from all the historical religious phenomena, we presuppose in ourselves the criterion by which they are judged namely, the absolute itself, which we seek to construct, and thus move only in a circle, and end where we began. To answer the question, we must go back to the primitive facts of religious consciousness within us. Then we find religion is VOLUNTARY OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD, INWARD AND OUTWARD OBEDIENCE to that law he has written on our nature, revealed in various ways through instinct, reason, conscience, and the religious emotions. Through it we regard Him as the absolute

seem to have risen from taking an exclusive view of some *positive* and *historical* form of religion. All *religions* claim to have been *miraculously revealed.*

object of reverence, faith, and, love.* This obedience may be unconscious, as in little children who have known no contradiction between duty and desire; and perhaps involuntary in the perfect saint, to whom all duties are desirable, who has ended the contradiction by willing himself God's will, and thus becoming one with God. It may be conscious, as with many men whose strife is not yet over. It seems the highest and completest mode of religion must be self-conscious,— free goodness, free piety, and free, self-conscious trust in God.†

Now there are two tendencies connected with religion, one is speculative: here the man is intellectually

* The above definition or Idea of Religion is not given as the only or the best that can possibly be given, but simply as my own, the best I can find. If others have a better I shall rejoice at it. I will give some of the more striking definitions that have been set forth by others. Plato: "A Likeness to God, according to our ability." John Smith: "God is First Truth and Primitive Goodness. True Religion is a vigorous efflux and emanation of both upon the Spirit of man, and therefore is called a Participation of the Divine Nature. . . . Religion is a heaven-born thing; the seed of God in the spirits of men whereby they are formed to a similitude and likeness of Himself." Kant: "Reverence for the moral law as a divine command." Schelling: "The union of the Finite and the Infinite." Fichte: "Faith in a moral government of the world." Hegel: "Morality becoming conscious of the free universality of its concrete essence." This will convey no idea to one not acquainted with the peculiar phraseology of Hegel. It seems to mean, perfect mind becoming conscious of itself. Schleiermacher: "Immediate self-consciousness of the absolute dependence of all the finite on the infinite." Hase: "Striving after the Absolute, which is in itself unattainable; but by love of it man participates of the divine perfection." Wollaston: "An obligation to *do* what ought not to be omitted, and to *forbear* what ought not to be done." Jeremy Taylor: "The whole duty of man, comprehending in it justice, charity, and sobriety." For the opinions of the ancients, see a treatise of Nitzsch, in Studien und Kritiken for 1828, p. 527, et seq.

† See Parker's Sermons of Theism, etc., Serm. V. and VI.

employed in matters pertaining to religion, to God, to man's religious nature, and his relation and connection with God. The result of this tendency is Theology. This is not religion itself. It is men's thought about religion; the philosophy of divine things; the science of religion. Its sphere is the mind of men. Religion and theology are no more to be confounded than the stars with astronomy*

While the religious element, like the intellectual or the moral, or human nature itself, remains ever the same, the religious consciousness of mankind is continually progressive; and so theology which is the intellectual expression thereof, advances, like all other science, from age to age. The most various theological doctrines exist in connection with religious emotions, helping or hindering man's general development. The highest notion I can form of religion is this, which I call the absolute religion: conscious service of the Infinite God by keeping every law he has enacted into the constitution of the universe,— service of Him by the normal use, discipline, development, and delight of every limb of the body, every faculty of the spirit, and so of all the powers we possess.

The other tendency is practical; here the man is employed in acts of obedience to religion. The result

* Much difficulty has arisen from this confusion of Religion and Theology; it is one proximate cause of that rancorous hatred which exists between the *theological* parties of the present day. Each connects Religion exclusively with its own sectarian theology. But there were great men before Agamemnon; good men before Moses. Theology is a natural product of the human mind. Each man has some notion of divine things — that is, a *theology;* if he collect them into a system, it is a *system of theology,* which differs in some points from that of every other man living. There is but one Religion, though many theologies. See de Wette, Ueber Religion und Theologie, Part I. Ch. I.–III.; Part II. Ch. I.–III.; his Dogmatik, § 4–8.

of this tendency is morality. This alone is not religion itself, but one part of the life religion demands. There may be morality deep and true with little or no purely religious consciousness, for a sharp analysis separates between the religious and moral elements in a man.* Morality is the harmony between man's action and the natural law of God. It is a part of religion which includes it "as the sea her waves." In its highest form morality doubtless implies religious emotions, but not necessarily the self-consciousness thereof. For though piety, the love of God, and benevolence, the love of man, do logically involve each other, yet experience shows that a man may see and observe the distinction between right and wrong, clearly and disinterestedly, without consciously feeling as such, reverence, or love of God; that is, he may be truly moral up to a certain point, without being consciously religious, though he cannot be truly religious without at the same time being moral also. But in a harmonious man, the two are practically inseparable as substance and form. The merely moral man in the actions, thoughts, and feelings which relate to his fellow-mortals, obeys the eternal law of duty, revealed in his nature, as such, and from love of that law, without regard to its author. The religious man obeys the same law, but regards it

* It seems plain, that the ethical and religious element in man are not the same; at least, they are as unlike as memory and imagination, though, like these, they act most harmoniously when in conjunction. It is true we cannot draw a line between them as between sight and hearing, but this inability to tell where one begins and the other ends, is no argument against the separate existence of the faculties themselves. See Kant, Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft; 2d Ed., 1787, Pref. p. iii. et seq. Still religion and morality are to be distinguished by their *centre* rather than their *circumference;* by their *type* more than their *limit.*

as the will of God. One rests in the law, the other only in its author.*

Now in all forms of religion there must be a common element which is the same thing in each man; not a similar thing, but just the same thing, differing only in degree, not in kind, and in its direction towards one or many objects, in both of which particulars it is influenced in some measure by external circumstances. Then since men exist under most various conditions, and in widely different degrees of civilization, it is plain that the religious consciousness must appear under various forms, accompanied with various doctrines, as to the number and nature of its objects, the deities; with various rites, forms, and ceremonies, as it means to appease, propitiate, and serve these objects; with various organizations, designed to accomplish the purposes which it is supposed to demand; and in short, with apparently various and even opposite effects upon life and character. As all men are at bottom the same, but as no two nations or ages are exactly alike in character, circumstances, or developments, so therefore, though the religious element be the same in all, we must expect to find its manifestations are never exactly alike in any two ages or nations, though they give the same name to their form of worship. If we look still more minutely, we see that no two men are exactly alike in character, circumstances, and development, and therefore that no two men can exhibit their religion in just the same way, though they kneel at the same altar, and pronounce the same creed. From the difference between men, it follows, that there must be as many different subjective conceptions of God,

* See Mr. Parker's Ten Sermons, Sermons I. to V.

and forms of religion, as there are men and women who think about God, and apply their thoughts and feelings to life. Hence, though the religious faculty be always the same in all, the doctrines of religion, or theology; the forms of religion, or mode of worship; and the practice of religion, which is morality, cannot be the same thing in any two men, though one mother bore them, and they were educated in the same way. The conception we form of God; our notion about man; of the relation between him and God; of the duties which grow out of that relation, may be taken as the exponent of all the man's thoughts, feelings, and life. They are therefore alike the measure and the result of the total development of a man, an age, or race. If these things are so, then the phenomena of religion — like those of science and art — must vary from land to land, and age to age, with the varying civilization of mankind; must be one thing in New Zealand, and the first century, and something quite different in New England, and the fifty-ninth century. They must be one thing in the wise man, and another in the foolish man. They must vary also in the same individual, for a man's wisdom, goodness, and general character, affect the phenomena of his religion. The religion of the boy and the man, of Saul the youth, and Paul the aged, how unlike they appear. The boy's prayer will not fill the man's heart; nor can the stripling son of Zebedee comprehend that devotion and life, which he shall enjoy when he becomes the saint mature in years.

CHAPTER V

THE THREE GREAT HISTORICAL FORMS OF RELIGION

Looking at the religious history of mankind, and especially at that portion of the human race which has risen highest in the scale of progress, we see that the various phenomena of religion may, for the present purpose, be summed up in three distinct classes or types, corresponding to three distinct degrees of civilization, and almost inseparable from them. These are FETICHISM, POLYTHEISM, and MONOTHEISM. But this classification is imperfect, and wholly external, though of use for the present purpose. It must be borne in mind that we never find a nation in which either mode prevails alone. Nothing is truer than this, that minds of the same spiritual growth, see the same spiritual truth. Thus, a savage saint, living in a nation of idolators or polytheists, worships the one true God, as Jesus of Nazareth has done. In a Christian land, superstitious men may be found, who are as much idolators as Nebuchadnezzar, or Jeroboam.

1. Fetichism denotes the worship of visible objects, such as beasts, birds, fish, insects, trees, mountains, the stars, the sun, the moon, the earth, the sea and air, as types of the infinite Spirit. It is the worship of Nature.* It includes many forms of religious observances

* It will probably be denied by some, that these objects were worshipped as symbols of the deity. It seems, however, that even the most savage nations regarded their idols only as types

that prevailed widely in ancient days, and still continue among savage tribes. It belongs to a period in the progress of the individual, or society, when civilization is low, the manners wild and barbarous, and the intellect acts in ignorance of the causes at work around it; when man neither understands nature, nor himself. Some writers suppose the human race started at first with a pure Theism; for the knowledge of truth, say they, must be older than the preception of error, in this respect. It seems the sentiment of man would lead him to the ONE GOD. Doubtless it would if the conditions of its highest action were perfectly fulfilled. But as this is not done in a state of ignorance and barbarism, therefore the religious sentiment mistakes its object, and sometimes worships the symbol more than the thing it stands for.

In this stage of growth, not only the common objects above enumerated, but gems, metals, stones that fell from heaven,* images, carved bits of wood, stuffed

of God. On this subject, see Constant, Religion, etc.; Paris. 1824. 5 vols. 8vo.: Philip Van Limburg Brauwer, Historie de la Civilization morale et religieuse des Grecs, etc.; Groningues, 1833–42, 8 vols. 8 vo., Vol. II. Ch. IX. X. et alibi. Oldendorp, Geschichte der Mission — auf — St. Thomas, etc.; Barby. 1777, p. 318, et seq. Du Culte des Dieux fétiches [par De Brosses; Paris] 1770. 1 vol. 12mo. Movers, Untersuchung über die Religion und der Gottheiten der Phönizier; Bonn. 1841. 2 vols. 8vo. Comte, Cours de Philosophie positive, Vol. V.; Stuhr, Allg. Gesch. der Religionsformen; Berlin, 1838, 2 vols. 8vo. Meimers, ubi supra, and the numerous accounts of the savage nations, by missionaries, travellers, etc. Catlin, ubi supra, Vol. I. p. 35, et seq. p. 88, et seq. p. 156, et seq. etc.

* These *Stone-fetiches* are called *Baetylia* by the learned. Cybele was worshipped in the form of a black stone, in Asia Minor. Theophrast. Charact. 16. Lucian, Pseudomant. § 30. The ancient Laplanders, also worshipped large stones called *Seitch*. See Scheffer's Lappland. In the time of Pausanias, at Phoræ, in Achaia, there were nearly thirty square stones, called

skins of beasts, like the *medicine-bags* of the North American Indians, are reckoned as divinities and so become objects of adoration.* But in this case the visible object is idealized; not worshipped as the brute thing it really is, but as the type and symbol of God. Nature is an apparation of the diety, God in a mask. Brute matter was never an object of adoration. Thus the Egyptians, who worshipped the crocodile, did not worship it as a crocodile, but as a symbol of God, "an appropriate one," says Plutarch, "for it alone, of all animals, has no tongue, and God needs none to speak his power and glory." Similar causes, it may be, led to the worship of other animals. Thus the hawk was a type of divine foresight; the bull of strength; the serpent of mystery. The Savage did not worship the buffalo, but the manitou of all buffaloes, the universal cause of each particular effect. Still more, there is something mysterious about the animals. Their instinctive knowledge of coming storms, and other events; the wondrous foresight of the beaver, the bee; the sagacity of the dog; the obscurity attending all

by the names of the Gods, and worshipped. Opp.; ed. Lips. 1838, Vol. II. Lib. VII. ch. 22, p. 618. Rough stones, he adds, formerly received divine honors universally in Greece. The erection of such is forbidden in Levit. XXVI. 1. et al., on this form of worship. See some curious facts collected by Michelet, Hist. de France, Liv. I. Eclaircissements, Oeuvres; Ed. Bruxelles, 1840. Tom. III. p. 51, 55, 61, et seq. 93, (note 1). The erection of *Baetylia* is forbidden by several councils of the Church, e. g. C. *Arelat,* II. Can. 23; C. *Autoisoid,* Can. 3; C. *Tolet,* XII. Can. 11.

* See Catlin, ubi supra. See also Legis, Fundgruben des Alten Nordens, Leip.; 1829, 2 vols. 8vo. and his Alkuna, Nordische und Nord-Slawische Mythologie; Leip. 1831, Vol. I., 8vo. Mone, Geschichte der Heidenthums in Nordlichen Europa; Leip. 1822, 2 vols. 8vo. See Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie; Gött, 1835, for this worship of Nature in the North.

their emotions, helped, no doubt, to procure them a place among powers greater than human. It is the unknown which men worship in common things; at this stage, man, whose emotions are understood, is never an object of adoration.*

Fetichism is the infancy of religion. Here the religious consciousness is still in the arms of rude, savage life, where sensation prevails over reflection. It is a deification of nature, "All is God, but God himself." It loses the infinite in the finite; worships the creature more than the Creator. Its lowest form — for in this lowest deep, there is a lower deep — is the worship of beasts; the highest the sublime, but deceitful reverence which the old Sabæan paid the host of Heaven, or which some Grecian or Indian philosopher offered to the universe personified, and called Pan, or Brahma. Then all the mass of created things was a fetich. God was worshipped in a sublime and devout, but bewildering Pantheism. He was not considered as distinct from the universe. Pantheism and fetichism are nearly allied.†

In the lowest form of this worship, so far as we can gather from the savage tribes, each individual has his

* But see the causes of animal worship assigned by Diod. Sic. Lip. I. p. 76. ed. Rhodoman; the remarks of Cicero, De Nat. Deorum. Tusc. V. et al.; Plutarch, De Iside et Osir. p. 72, et seq. et al.; Wilkinson, Manners, etc. of Ancient Egypt, 2d series, Vol. I. p. 104, seq. and Phorphyry, De Abst, IV. 9, cited by him. Jean Paul says, that "in the beast men see the Isis-veil of a Deity," a thought which Hegel has expanded in his Philos. der Religion. See Creutzer, Symbol. 3d ed. Vol. I. p. 30, et seq.

† In consequence of the opinion in fetichistic nations, that external things have a mysterious life, M. Comte, ubi supra, Vol. V. p. 36, et seq. discovers traces of it in animals. When a savage, a child, or a dog, first hears a watch tick, each sup-

own peculiar fetich, a beast, an image, a stone, a mountain, or a star, a concrete and visible type of God. For it seems, in this state, that all, or most external things, are supposed to have a life analogous in kind to ours, but more or less intense in degree. The concrete form is but the vail of God, like that before Isis in Egypt. There are no priests, for each man has access to his own deity at will. Worship and prayer are personal, and without mediators. The age of the priesthood, as a distinct class, has not come. Worship is entirely free; there is no rite, established and fixed. Public theological doctrines are not yet formed. There are no mysteries in which each may not share.

The state of fetichism continues as long as man is in the gross state of ignorance which renders it possible. Next, as the power of abstraction and generalization becomes enlarged, and the qualities of external nature are understood, there are concrete and visible

poses it endowed with life, "whence results, by natural *consequence,* a Fetichism, which, at botom, is common to all three!" Here he confounds the *sign* with the *cause.*

Pliny has a curious passage in which he ascribes to the elephant Æquitas, Religio quoque Siderum; Solisque ac Lunae Veneratio. Nat. Hist. Lib. VIII. Ch. 1. The notion that beasts had a moral sense appears frequently among the ancients. Ulpian says jus naturale is common to all animals. Origen says that Celsus taught that there was no difference between the soul of man and that of emmets, bees, etc., Lib. II. Cels. Cont. Clement of Alex. (Stromt. VI. 14. p. 705–6, ed. Potter,) says God gave the heathen the sun, moon, and stars, that they might worship them, such worship being the way to that of God himself. Perhaps he was led to this opinion by following the LXX. in Deut. IV. 19.

Fetichism continued in Europe long after the introduction of Christianity. The councils of the church forbid its various forms in numerous decrees, e. g. C. *Turg.* II. can. *22.* C. *Autoisiod.* can. 1. 4; C. *Quinisext,* can. 62. 65. 79: *Narbon.* can. 15. C. *Rothomag.* can. 4. 14. See in Stäudlin, Gesch. Theol. Vol. III. 371, et seq.

Gods for the family; next for the tribe; then for the nation. But their power is supposed to be limited within certain bounds. A subsequent generalization gives an invisible but still concrete deity for each department of Nature — the earth, the sea, the sky.

Now as soon as there is a fetich for the family, or the tribe, a mediator becomes needed to interpret the will, and insure the favor of that fetich, to bring rain, or plenty, or success, and to avert impending evils. Such are the *angekoks* of the Esquimaux, the *medicine-men* of the Mandans, the *jugglers* of the negroes. Then a priesthood gradually springs up, at first possessing none but spiritual powers; at length it surrounds its God with mysteries; excludes him from the public eye; establishes forms, sacrifices, and doctrines; limits access to the Gods; becomes tyrannical; aspires after political power, and founds a theocracy, the worst of despotisms, the earliest, and the most lasting.* Still it has occupied a high and indispensable position in the development of the human race.

The highest form of fetishism is the worship of the stars, or of the universe.† Here it easily branches off

* See at the end of Hodges's "Elihu," etc.; London, 1750, 1 vol. 4to. a striking account of the manner in which religious forms are established, taken from a French publication which was burned by the common hangman at Paris. See also on the establishment and influence of the priesthood upon religion, Constant de la Religion, ubi sup. Vol. II. Liv. III. IV.; Vol. IV. passim. His judgment of the priesthood, though often just, is sometimes too severe. Comte, ubi sup. Vol. V. p. 57, et seq. On the priesthood among savage nations, see Pritchard, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 206, et seq. Meiners, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 481–602.

† See Strabo's remarkable account of the worship of the Ancient Persians, Opp. ed. Siebenkees, Vol. VI. Lib. XV. § 13, p. 221. See too the remarks of Herbert, De Religione Gentilitium; Amst. 1663, 1 vol. 4to. Ch. II. XIV. et al.

into polytheism. Indeed it is impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends, for traces of each of the three forms are found in all the others; the two must be distinguished by their centre, not their circumference. The GREAT SPIRIT is worshipped, perhaps, in all stages of fetichism. The fetich and the manitou, visible types, are not the great spirit. But even in the worship of many gods, or of ONE alone, traces of the ruder form still linger. The fetich of the individual is preserved in the amulet, worn as a charm; in the figure of an animal painted on the dress, the armor, or the flesh of the worshipper. The family fetich survives in the household gods; the penates of the Romans; the teraphim of Laban; the idol of Micah. The fetich of the tribe still lives in the lares of the Roman; in the patron god of each Grecian people; in some animal treated with great respect, or idealized in art, as the Bull Apis, the brazen serpent, horses consecrated to the sun in Solomon's temple;* in an image of deity, like the old wooden statues of Minerva, always religiously kept, or the magnificent figures of the gods in marble, ivory, or gold, the productions of maturest art; in some chosen symbol, the Palladium, the Ancilia, the Ark of the Covenant. The fetich of the nation, almost inseparably connected with the former, is still remembered in the mystical cherubim, and Most Holy Place among the Jews; in the Olympian Jove of Greece, and the Capitoline Jupiter of Rome; in the image of "the Great Goddess Diana, which fell down from Jupiter." It appears also in reverence for particular places formerly deemed the local and exclusive residence of the fetich,— such as the Caaba at Mecca; Hebron,

* Vatke, Biblische Theologie; Berlin, 1835, Vol. I. attempts to trace out the connection of Fetichism with the Jewish ritual.

Moriah, and Bethel in Judea; Delphi in Greece, and the great gathering places of the North-men in Europe, spots deemed holy by the superstitious even now, and therefore made the site of Christian churches.*

Other and more general vestiges of fetichism remain in the popluar superstitions; in the belief of signs, omens, auguries, divination by the flight of birds, and other accidental occurrences; in the notion that unusual events, thunder, and earthquakes, and pestilence, are peculiar manifestations of God; that he is more specially present in a certain place, as a church, or time, as the sabbath, or the hour of death; is pleased with actions not natural, sacrifices, fasts, penance, and the like.† Perhaps no form of religion has yet been adopted, which has not the stain of fetichism upon it. The popular Christian theology is full of it. The names of the constellations are records of fetichism that will long endure.‡

Under this form religion has the smallest sound in-

* See Mone, ubi supra, Vol. I. p. 23, et seq. p. 43, et seq. p. 113, et seq. p. 249, et seq. and elsewhere. Wilkinson, ubi sup. Vol. I. Ch. XII. Vol. II. Ch. II. and XIV. His theory, however, differs widely from the above. Whatever was extraordinary was deemed eminently divine. Thus with the Hebrews a great cedar was the *cedar of God.* Other nations had their Dê-wadâ-ru, God-timber, etc. See Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, p. 41, et seq. Lucan, Pharsal, Lib. III. 399, et seq. Mithridates, at the siege of Patara, dared not cut down the sacred trees. Appian De Bello Mith. Ch. XXVII. Opp. ed Schweighauser, I. p. 679–80.

† The great religious festivals of the Christians, Yule and Easter, are easily traced back to such an occasion, at least to analogous festivals of fetichistic or polytheistic people. The festival of John the Baptist must be put in this class. See some details on this subject in a very poor book of Nork's, Der Mystagog, etc.

‡ See Creutzer, Symbolik und Mythologie, 3d ed. Vol. I. p. 30, et seq.

fluence upon life; the religious does not aid the moral element.* The supposed demands of religion seem capricious to the last degree, unnatural and absurd. The imperfect priesthood of necromancers and jugglers,— which belongs to this period,— enhances the evil by multiplying rites; encouraging asceticism; laying heavy burdens upon the people; demanding odious mutilations and horrible sacrifices, often of human victims, in the name of God, and in helping to keep religion in its infant state, by forbidding the secular eye to look upon its mysterious jugglery, and prohibiting the banns between faith and knowledge. Still this class, devoted to speculation and study, does great immediate service to the race, by promoting science and art, and indirectly and against its will contributes to overturn the form it designs to support. The priesthood comes unavoidably.†

In a low form of fetichism, a law of nature seems scarce ever recognized. All things are taught to have a life of their own; all phenomena, growth, decay, and reproduction. The seasons of the year, the changes in the sky, and similar things, depend on the caprice of the deities. The jugglers can made it rain; a witch can split the moon; a magician heal the sick. Law is resolved into miracle. The most cunning men, who understand the laws of nature better than others, are miracle-workers, magicians, priests, necromancers, astrologers, soothsayers, physicians, general mediators

* The Guaycarus Indians of South America put to death all children born before the 30th year of their mother. Bartlett's Progress of Ethnology; N. Y. 1847, p. 28.

† See the remarks of Lafitau, Mœurs des sauvages Ameriquains, etc., 2 vols. 4to; Paris, 1734, Vol. I. p. 108–456. His work is amazingly superficial, but contains now and then a good thing.

and interpreters of the gods; as the Mandans called them "great medicine-men." *

Then as men experience both joy and grief, pain and pleasure, and as they are too rude in thought to see that both are but different phases of the same thing, and affliction is but success in a mask, it is supposed they cannot be the work of the same divinity. Hence comes the wide division into good and evil gods, a distinction found in all religions, and carefully preserved in the theological doctrines of the Christian church. Worship is paid both to the good and evil deity. A sacrifice is offered to avert the wrath of the one, and secure the favor of the other. The sacrifice corresponds to the character ascribed to the deity, and this depends again on the national and personal character of the devotee.†

Now in that stage of civilization where every man has his own personal deity and no two perhaps the same, the bond that unites man to man is exceedingly slight. Each man's hand is, in some measure, against his brother's. Opposition, or unlikeness among the

* Mr. Catlin, ubi sup. relates anecdotes that illustrate the state of thought and feeling in the state of Fetichism. Much also may be found in Marco Polo's Travels in the Eastern parts of the World; London, 1818, and in Marsden's notes to that edition. The early Voyagers, likewise, are full of facts that belong here.

† The worship of *evil beings* is a curious phenomenon in human history. The literature of the subject is copious and instructive. Some famous men think the existence of the devil cannot be found out by the light of nature and unaided reason; others make it a doctrine of *natural* religion. Some think him incapable of Atheism, though only a *speculative theist*. The doctrine is a disgrace to the Christian church, and well fittted to excite the disgust of thinking and pious men. But see what may be said for the doctrine by Mayer, Historia Diaboli, 2d edition; 1780. See the literature in Wegscheider, Institutiones, § 104–5.

gods, leads to hostility among men. Thus family is arrayed against family, tribe against tribe, nation against nation, because the peculiar god of the one family, tribe, or nation, is deemed hostile to all others. Therefore among cruel nations, whose gods of course are conceived of as cruel, the most acceptable sacrifice to the fetiche is the blood of his enemies. A stranger whom accident or design brings to the devotee is a choice offering. The saint is a murderer. War is a constant and normal state of men, not an exception as it afterwards becomes; the captives are sacrificed as a matter of course. The energies of the race are devoted to destruction; not to creative industry. It is the business of a man to war; of a slave and a woman to till the soil. The fancied god guides the deepening battle; presides over the butchery, and canonizes the bloody hand. He is the god of battles, teaches men to war, inspires them to fight.

It is, unfortunately, but too easy to find historical verifications of this phase of human nature. The Jews, in their early and remarkable passage from fetichism to polytheism and monotheism — if we may trust the tale — resolve to exterminate all the Canaanites, millions of men, unoffending and peaceful, because the two nations worshipped different gods, and Jehovah, the peculiar deity of the Jews, a jealous god, demanded the destruction of the other nation, who did not worship him. Men, women, and children must be slain.* The

* See a dreadful example of human sacrifice in 2 Kings, III. 27. This prevailed in many parts of America when first discovered by the Christians, who continued in a different form, not offering to God but Mammon. See Bancroft, History of the United States, Vol. III. p. 296–7, for some forms of this. The whole of Chap. XXII. is replete with philosophical and historical instruction, and one of the most valuable and brilliant even in *that* series of shining pages.

Spaniards found cannibalism in the name of God, prevailing at Mexico, and elsewhere. In our day it still continues in the South Sea Islands, under forms horrible almost as of old in the Holy Land.*

But the intense demands which war makes on all the energies of men, help to unfold the thinking faculty, to elevate the race, and thus indirectly to promote truer notions of religion. This war, cruel and hideous monster as he is, has yet rocked art and science in notions of religion. Thus war, cruel and hideous his bloody arms. God makes the wrath of man to praise him;

> "From seeming evil still educing good,
> And better thence again, and better still
> In infinite progression."

As civilization goes forward in this rough way, the voice of humanity begins to speak more loudly, morality is wedded to religion, and a new progeny is born to bless the world. It begins to be felt that if the captive consents to serve his conqueror's god, the service will be more acceptable than his death. Hence he is spared; still worships his own deity perhaps, but confesses the superiority of the victorious god. The god of the conquered party becomes a devil, or a strange god, or a servant of the controlling deity. Thus the

* On this passage in human history, see Comte, Vol. V. p. 90, et seq. p. 132, et seq. and p. 186, et seq.

See F. W. Chillani, Die Menschen-Opf. der alten Hebräer; Nürmberg, 1842, 1 vol. 8vo. He strongly maintains that human sacrifice was not forbidden by Moses, but continued a legal and essential part of the national worship till the separation of the two kingdoms. Vestiges of this he thinks appear in the consecration of the first-born, in circumcision, in the Paschal Lamb, etc. etc. He cites many curious facts. See p. 376. Daumer Geheimnitze des Christlichen Alterthums; Hamb. 1847, ch. 3, 5, 9–16, 74, 75, et al.

Gibeonites and the Helots who once would have been sacrificed to the conquering god, became hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Hebrews and the Spartans, and served to develop the directly useful and creative faculties of man. The gods demand the service, not the lifeblood of the stranger and captive. No doubt the anointed priesthood opposed this refinement with a "Thus saith the Lord," and condemned such as received the blessing of men ready to perish. But it would not do. Samuel hews Agag in pieces, though Saul would have saved him; but the days of Samuel also are numbered, and the theocratic power pales its ineffectual ray before a rising light.

II. Polytheism is the next stage in the religious development of mankind. Here reflection begins to predominate over sensation. As the laws of nature, the habits and organization of animals, begin to be understood, they cease to represent the true object of worship. No man ever deified weight and solidity. But as men change slowly from form to form, and more slowly still from form to the substance, coarse and material fetichism must be idealized before it could pass away. No doubt men, for the sake of example, bowed to the old stock and stone when they knew an idol was nothing. It might offend the weak to give up the lie all at once.

Polytheism is the worship of many gods without the worship of animals. It may be referred to two sources, worship of the powers of material nature, and of the powers of spiritual nature. Its history is that of a conflict between the two.* In the earliest epoch of Greek

* In what relates to this subject, I shall consider Polytheism as it appeared to the great mass of its votaries. Its most

polytheism, the former prevails; the latter at a subsequent period. The early deities are children of the earth, the sky, the ocean. These objects themselves are gods.* In a word, the Saturnian gods of the older mythology are deified powers of nature: but in the mythology of the later philosophers, it is absolute spiritual power, that rules the world from the top of Olympus, and the subordinate deities are the spiritual faculties of man personified and embellished.† Matter, no longer worshipped, is passive, powerless, and dishonored. The animals are driven off from Olympus. Man is idealized and worshipped. The supreme wears the personality of men. Anthropomorphism takes the place of a deification of nature. The popular gods are of the same origin as their worshippers, born, nursed, bred, but immortal and not growing old.‡ They are married like men and women, and become parents. They preside over each department of nature, and each province of art.§ Pluto rules over the abodes of

obvious phenomena are the most valuable. Some, as Bryant, take the speculations of naturalists and make it only a system of physics: others, as Cudworth, following the refinements of later philosophers, would prove it to be a system of Monotheism in disguise. But to the mass, Apollo was not the sun, nor the beautiful influence of God, whatsoever he might appear to the mystic sage.

* Julius Firmicus maintains that the heathen deities were simply deified natural objects. De Errore prof. Religionum, Ch. I.–V. But Clement of Alexandria, more wisely refers them to seven distinct sources. Cohortatio ad Gentes, Opp. I. ed. Potter, p. 21, 22. Earth and Heaven are the oldest Gods of Greece.

† See for example the contest of Eros and Anacreon, Carm. XIV. p. 18, 19, ed. Möbius.

‡ See Heyne, Excursus VIII. in Iliad, I. 494, p. 189. Hegel, Philosophie der Rel. Vol. II. p. 96–141. Werke, Vol. XII. Pindar, Nem. VI. 1, et seq. Olymp. XII. et seq., etc.

§ See Aristotle, Metaphysica, Opp. ed. Baker; Oxford, 1837.

the departed; Neptune over the ocean; Jove over the land and sky. One divinity wakes the olive and the corn, another has charge of the vine. One guides the day from his chariot with golden wheels. A sister deity walks in brightness through the nocturnal sky. A fountain in the shade, a brook leaping adown the hills, or curling through the plains; a mountain walled with savage rocks; a sequestered vale fringed with romantic trees,— each was the residence of a god. Demons dwelt in dark caves, and shook the woods at night with hideous rout, breaking even the cedars. They sat on the rocks — fair virgins above the water, but hideous shapes below — to decoy sailors to their destruction. The mysterious sounds of nature, the religious music of the wind playing among the pines, at eventide, or stirring the hot palm tree at noonday, was the melody of the god of sounds.* A beautiful form of man or woman was a shrine of God.† The storms had a deity. Witches rode the rack of night. A god offended roused nations to war, or drove Ulysses over

VIII. Lib. XI. § 8, p. 233, et seq. In the old Pelasgic Polytheism, it seems there were no proper names for the individual Gods. The general term *Gods* was all. Herodotus, Lib. II. ch. 52, Opp. ed. Baehr. I. p. 606, et seq. Plato mentions the two classes of Gods, one derived from the *worship of nature,* the other from that of *man.* Legg. Lib. XI. Opp. ed. Ast. VII. p. 344. See Plutarch cited in Eusebius, P. E. III. 1, p. 57, Vers. Lat.; ed. 1579.

* See the beautiful lines of Wordsworth, Excursion; Boston 1824, Book IV. p. 159, et seq. See also Creutzer, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 8–29.

† See Herodotus, V. 47. The Greeks erected an altar on the grave of Philippos, the most beautiful of the Greeks, and offered sacrifice. See Wachsmuth, Antiquities of Greece, Vol. II. 2, p. 315, on the general adoration of beauty amongst the Greeks. Hegel calls this worship the *Religion of Beauty.* Phil. der Religion, Vol. II. p. 96, et seq. National character marks the religious form.

many lands. A pestilence, drought, famine, inundation, an army of locusts was the special work of a god.* No ship is called by the name of Glaucus because he offended a deity.†

Arts also have their patron divinity. Phœbus-Apollo

* A *disease* was sometimes personified and worshipped, as fever at Rome. See Ælian, Var. Hist. XII. 11, p. 734, et seq. ed. Gronivius. Valerius Maximus, Lib. II. Ch. V. 6. Vol. I. p. 126, et seq. ed. Hase. Some say a certain ruin at Tivoli is the remnant of a temple to *Tussis*, a cough. Cicero speaks of a temple to *Fever* on the Palatine. Nat. Deorum, III. 15, Opp. 15, Opp. ed. Lemaire, XII. p. 333, where see the note. Nero erected a monument to the Manes of a crystal vase that got broken. Temples were erected to *Shame* and *Impudence*, *Fear*, *Death*, *Laughter*, and *Gluttony*, among the heathen, as shrines to the saints among Christians. Pausanias, Lib. IV. Ch. XVII. says, the Athenians alone of all the Greeks had a temple for Modesty and Mercy. See, however, the ingenious remark of Cousin, Journal des Savans, March, 1835, p. 136, et seq. and Creutzer's animadversions thereon, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 135–6. Brouwer, Vol. I. p. 357. In India, each natural object is the seat of a God. But in Greece the worship of nature passed into the higher form. See some fanciful remarks of Hermann on the most ancient mythology of the Greeks in his Opuscula, Vol. II. p. 167. It is a noticeable fact that some of the old Polytheistic theogonies spoke of a *gradual and progressive development of the Gods;* the *creator* keeps even pace with the *creation*. The explanation of a fact so singular as the self-contradictory opinion that the infinite is not always the same, may be found in the history of *human conceptions* of God, for these are necessarily progressive. See Aristotle, Metaphysics, XIV. p. 1000, et seq. Opp. II. ed. Duval; Par. 1629. See Hesiod's Theogony everywhere, and note the *progress of the divine species* from Chaos and Earth, to the moral divinities, Eunomia, Dike, Eirene, etc. In some of the Oriental theogonies, the rule was inverted, the first *emanation* was the best. See Warton, History of English Poetry; Lond. 1824, Vol. I. Pref. by the Editor.

† Herodotus, Lib. VI. 86, relates the beautiful story of Glaucus, so full of moral truth. Compare with it, Zechariah V. 3–4, Job XV. 20, et seq. XVIII. et seq. where the same beautiful and natural sentiment appears.

inspires the poet and artist; the Muses — Daughters of Memory and Jove — fire the bosom from their golden urn of truth;* Thor, Ares, Mars, have power in war; a sober virgin-goddess directs the useful arts of life; a deity presides over agriculture, the labors of the smith, the shepherd, the weaver, and each art of man. He defends men engaged in these concerns. Every nation, city, or family has its favorite god — a Zeus, Athena, Juno, Odin, Baal, Jehovah, Osiris, or Melkartha, who is supposed to be partial to the nation which is his "chosen people." Now perhaps no nation ever believed in many separate, independent, absolute deities. All the gods are not of equal might. One is king of all, the god of gods, who holds the others with an iron sway. Sometimes he is the All-Father; sometimes the All-Fate, which, in some ages, seems to be made a substitute for the one true God.† Each nation thinks its own chief god greater than the gods of all other nations; or, in time of war, seeks to seduce the hostile

* See the strange pantheistic account of the origin and history of Gods and all things in the Orphic poems and Mythology. These have been collected and treated of with great discrimination by Lobeck, Aglaophamus, Vol. I. p. 473, et seq. See the more summary account in Brandis, Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. I. p. 60, et seq. There are some valuable thoughts in Cruetzer's Review of the new edition of *Cornutus*, De Nat. Deorum, in Theol. Stud. und Kritiken für 1846, p. 208 et seq.

† Men must believe in somewhat that to them is Absolute; if their conception of the Deity be imperfect, they unavoidably retreat to a somewhat superior to the deity. Thus for every defect in the popular conception of Zeus, some new power is added to Fate. "It is impossible even for God to escape Fate," said Herodotus. See also Cudworth, Ch. I. § 1–3, Zenophanes makes a sharp distinction between *God* and the *Gods*. See in Clem. Alex. Strom. V. p. 601, and the remarks of Brandis, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 361, et seq. note. See also Vol. II. p. 340, et seq. See too Cornutus (or Phurnutus) De Nat. Deorum in Gale, Opusc, mythologica, etc.; Amst. 1688.

gods by sacrifice, promise of temples and ceremonies, a pilgrimage or a vow. Thus the Romans invoked the gods of their enemy to come out of the beleagured city, and join with them, the conquerors of the world. The gods were to be had at a bargain. Jacob drives a trade with Elohim; the god receives a human service as adequate return for his own divine service.* The promise of each is only " for value received."

In this stage of religious development each deity does not answer to the idea of God, as mentioned above; it is not the being of infinite power, wisdom, and love. Neither the Zeus of the Iliad, nor the Elohim of Genesis, nor the Jupiter of the Pharsalia, nor even the Jehovah of the Jewish prophets is always this. A transient and complex conception takes the place of the eternal idea of God. Hence his limitations; those of a man. Jehovah is narrow; Zeus is licentious; Hermes will lie and steal; Juno is a shrew.†

The gods of polytheistic nations are in part deified men.‡ The action of many men, of different ages and countries, are united into one man's achievements, and we have a Hercules, or an Apollo, a thrice-great Hermes, a Jupiter, or an Odin. The inventors of useful arts, as agriculture, navigation; of the plough, the loom, laws, fire and letters, subsequently became gods.

* Genesis XXVIII. 10–22.

† Sermons of Theism, etc. Sermon III. and IV.

‡ Tertullian, De Anima, Ch. 33. See Meiners, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 290, et seq. Pindar, Olymp. II. 68, et seq. ed. Dissen. and his remarks, Vol. II. p. 36, et seq. This Anthropomorphism took various forms in Greece, Egypt, and India. In the former it was the *elevation of a man to the Gods;* in the latter the *descent of a God to man.* This feature of Oriental worship furnishes a fruitful hint as to the origin of the doctrine of *the Incarnation,* and its value. The doctrine of some Christians unites the two, in the *God-man.*

Great men, wise men, good men, were honored while living; they are deified when they decease. As they judged or governed the living once, so now the dead. Their actions are idealized; the good lives after them; their faults are buried. Statues, altars, temples are erected to them. He who was first honored as a man, is now worshipped as a god.* To these personal deities are added the attributes of the old fetiches, and still more the powers of nature. The attributes of the moon, the sun, the lightning, the ocean, or the stars are transferred to a personal being, conceived as a man. To be made strong he is made monstrous, with many hands, or heads. In a polytheistic nation, if we trace the history of the popular conception of any god, that of Zeus among the Grecians, for example, we see a gradual advance, till their highest god becomes their conception of the absolute. Then the others are insignificant; merely his servants; like colonels and corporals in an army, they are parts of his state machinery. The passage to monotheism is then easy.† The spiritual leaders of every nation — obedient souls into whom the spirit enters and makes them Sons of God and prophets,— see the meaning which the popular notion hides; they expose what is false, proclaim the eternal truth, and as their recompense, are stoned, exiled, or

* See the origin of Idolatry laid down in Wisdom of Solomon, Ch. XIV. 17–19. Warburton, Divine Legation, Book V. § II. [III.]

† There are two strongly marked tendencies in all polytheistic religions — one towards pure Monotheism, the other to Pantheism. See an expression of the latter in Orpheus, ed. Hermann, p. 457, "Zeus is the first, Zeus the last," etc. etc., cited also in Cudworth, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 404. See Zeno, in Diogenes Laertius, ed. Hübner, Lib. VII. Ch. 73, Vol. II. p. 186, et seq.; Clemens Alexand. Stromat VII. 12. See also Cudworth, Ch. IV. § 17, et seq., and Mosheim's Annotations.

slain. But the march of mankind is over the tombs of the prophets. The world is saved only by crucified redeemers. The truth is not silenced with Aristotle; nor exiled with Anaxagoras; nor slain with Socrates. It enters the soul of its veriest foes, and their children build up the monuments of the murdered seer.

We cannot enter into the feelings of a polytheist; nor see how morality was fostered by his religion. Ours would be a similar puzzle to him. But polytheism has played a great part in the development of mankind — yes, in the development of morality and religion.* Its aim was to "raise a mortal to the skies;" to infinitize the finite; to bridge over the great gulf between man and God. Let us look briefly at some of its features.

I. In polytheism we find a regular priesthood. This is sometimes exclusive and hereditary, as in Egypt and India, where it establishes castes, and founds a theocracy; sometimes not hereditary, but open, free, as in Greece.† When "every clove of garlic is a god," as in fetichism, each man is his own priest; but when a troop of fetiches are condensed into a single god, and he is invisible, all cannot have equal access to him, for he is not infinite, but partial; chooses his own place and time. Some mediator, therefore, must stand between the god and common men.‡ This was the func-

* M. Comte thinks this the period of the greatest religious activity! The *facts* look the other way.

† Even in Greece some sacerdotal functions vested by descent in certain families, for example, in the Iambides, Branchides, Eumolpides, Asclepiades, Cerycides, Clitiades. See them in Wachsmuth, Vol. I. P. I. p. 152. See Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, Ch. V. Meiners. Vol. II. Book XII.; Brouwer, Vol. I.

‡ See Montesquieu, Esprit des Lois, Liv. XXV. Ch. IV. See

tion of the priest. Perhaps his office became hereditary at a very early period, for as we trace backward the progress of mankind, the law of inheritance has a wider range. The priesthood, separated from the actual cares of war, and of providing for material wants — the two sole departments of human activity in a barbarous age — have leisure to study the will of the gods. Hence arises a learned class, who gradually foster the higher concerns of mankind. The effort to learn the will of the gods, leads to the study of nature, and therefore to science. The attempt to please them by images, ceremonies, and the like, leads to architecture, statues, music, poetry, and hymns — to the elegant arts. The priesthood fostered all these. It took different forms to suit the genius of different nations; established castes and founded the most odious despotism in Egypt and the East, and perhaps the North, but in Greece left public opinion comparatively free. In the one, change of opinion was violent and caused commotion, as the fabled giant buried under Ætna shakes the island when he turns; in the other it was natural, easy as for Endymion to turn the other cheek to the moon. Taken in the whole, it has been a heavy rider on the neck of the nations. Its virtue has been, in a rude age to promote science, art, patriotism, piety to the gods, and in a certain fashion, love to men. But its vice has been to grasp at the throat of mankind, control their thoughts and govern their life, aspiring to be the will of the world. When it has been free, as in the philosophic age in Greece, its in-

Priestley's Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos, etc.; Northumberland, 1799, § X. for the esteem in which the sacerdotal class was held in India. Brouwer, Vol. III. Ch. XVIII., XIX. Also Von Bohlen, Das alte Indien, Vol. I. p. 45, et seq.; Vol. II. p. 12, et seq.

fluence has been deep, silent, and unseen; blessed and beautiful. But when it is hereditary and exclusive, it preserves the form, ritual, and creed of barbarous times in the midst of civilization; separates morality from religion, life from belief, good sense from theology; demands horrible sacrifices of the body, or the soul; and, like the angry god in the old Pelasgic fable, chains for eternal damnation the bold free spirit which, learning the riddle of the world, brings down the fire of heaven to bless poor mortal men. It were useless to quote examples of the influence of the priesthood. It has been the burthen of fate upon the human race. Each age has its Levites; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. In many nations their story is a tale of blood; the tragedy of sin and woe.*

II. In the polytheistic period, war is a normal state and almost constant. Religion then unites men of the same tribe and nation; but severs one people from another. The gods are hostile; Jehovah and Baal cannot agree. Their worshippers must bite and devour one another. It is high treason for a citizen to communicate the form of the national religion to a foreigner; Jehovah is a jealous god. Strangers are sacrificed in Tauris and Egypt, and the captives in war put to death at the command of the priest. But war at that period had also a civilizing influence. It was to the ancient world what trade is to modern times: another form

* See the one-sided view of Constant, which pervades his entire work on Religion. See his Essay on the "Progressive Development of Religious Ideas," in Ripley's Philosophical Miscellanies, Vol. II. p. 292, et seq. Virgil, in his description of the Elysian fields, assigns the first place to *Legislators*, the magnanimous Heroes, who civilized mankind; the next to *Patriots*, and the third to *Priests*. Aen VI. 661, et seq.

of the same selfishness. It was the chief method of extending a nation's influence. The remnant of the conquered nation was added to the victorious empire; became its slaves, or tributaries, and at last shared its civilization, adding the sum of its own excellence to the moral treasury of its master. Conquered Greece gave arts and philosophy to Rome; the exiled Jews brought back from Babylon the great doctrine of eternal life. The Goths conquered Rome, but Roman Christianity subdued the Goths. Religion, allied with the fiercest animal passions, demanded war; this led to science. It was soon seen that one head which thinks is worth a hundred hands. Science elevates the mass of men, they perceive the folly of bloodshed, and its sin. Thus war, by a fatal necessity, digs its own grave. The art of production surpasses the art to destroy.*

All the wars of polytheistic nations have more or less a religious character. Their worship, however, favored less the extermination of enemies than their subjugation, while monotheism, denying the existence of all dieties but one, when it is superinduced upon a nation, in a rude state, like fetichism itself, butchers its captives, as the Jews, the Mahometans, and the Christians have often done — a sacrifice to the bloodthirsty phantom they call a god.† In the ruder stages of polytheism, war is the principal occupation of men. The military and the priestly powers, strength of body and strength of thought, are the two scales of society;

* M. Montgéry, a French Captain, touchingly complains "that the art to destroy, though the easiest of all from its very nature, is now much less advanced than the art of production, in spite of the superior difficulty of the latter." Quoted in Comte, ubi sup. Vol. V. p. 167.

† Here is the explanation of the given facts collected by Daumer and others.

science and art are chiefly devoted to kill men and honor the gods. The same weapons which conquer the spoil, sacrifice it to the deity.*

III. But as polytheism leads men to spare the life of the captive, so it leads to a demand for his service. Slavery, therefore, like war, comes unavoidably from this form of religion, and the social system which grows out of it. At this day, under the influence of monotheism, we are filled with deep horror at the thought of one man invading the personality of another, to make him a thing — a slave. The flesh of a religious man creeps at the thought of it. But yet slavery was an indispensable adjunct of this rough form of society. Between that fetichism which bade a man slay his captive, eating his body and drinking his blood as indispensable elements of his communion with God, and that polytheism which only makes him a slave, there is a great gulf which it required long centuries to fill up and pass over. Anger slowly gave place to interest; perhaps to mercy. Without this change, with the advance of the art to destroy, the human race must have perished. By means of slavery the art of production was advanced. The Gibeonite and the Helot must work and not fight. Thus by forced labor, the repugnance against work which is so powerful among the barbarous and half-civilized, is overcome; systematic industry is developed; the human race is helped forward in this mysterious way. Both the theocratic and the military caste demanded a servile class, inseparable from the spirit of barbarism, and

* M. Comte, Vol. V. p. 165, et seq., has some valuable remarks on this stage of human civilization. See also Vico, Scienza nuova, Bib. II. Cap. I.–IV.

the worship of many gods, which falls as that spirit dies out, and the recognition of one God, Father of all, drives selfishness out of the heart. In an age of polytheism, slavery and war were in harmony with the institutions of society and the spirit of the age. Murder and cannibalism, two other shoots from the same stock, had enjoyed their day. All are revolting to the spirit of monotheism; at variance with its idea of life; uncertain and dangerous; monstrous anomalies full of deadly peril. The priesthood of polytheism — like all castes based on a lie — upheld the system of slavery, which rested on the same foundation with itself. The slavery of sacerdotal governments is more oppressive and degrading than that of a military despotism. It binds the soul — makes distinctions in the nature of men. The prophet would free men; but the priest enslaves. As polytheism does its work, and man develops his nature higher than the selfish, the condition of the slave is made better. It becomes a religious duty to free the bondsmen at their master's death, as formerly the priests had burned them on his funeral pile, or buried them alive in his tomb to attend him in the realm of shades.* Just as civilization advanced

* See, who will, the mingling of profound and superficial remarks on this subject in Montesquieu, ubi sup.; Liv. XV. Grotius, De jure Belli ac Pacis Lib. III. Ch. VII.–VIII. Selden, De jure naturali, etc.; ed. 1680, Lib. I. Ch. V. p. 174, and Lib. VII. VIII. XII. et al. See the valuable treatise of Charles Comte, Traité de la Législation, ou Exposition des Lois générales suivant lesquelles les Peuples prospérent, dépérissent ou restent stationaire, etc. etc. 3d ed.; Bruxelles, 1837, Liv. V. the whole of which is devoted to the subject of salvery and its influence in ancient and modern times. We need only compare the popular opinion respecting slavery among the Jews, with that of the Greeks or Romans, in their best days, to see the influences of monotheism and polytheism in regard to this subject. See some remarks on the Jewish slavery in Michaelis's

and the form of religion therewith, it was found difficult to preserve the institution of ancient crime, which sensuality and sin clung to and embraced.*

IV. Another striking feature of polytheistic influence, was the union of power over the body, with power over the soul; the divine right to prescribe actions and prohibit thoughts. This is the fundamental principle of all theocracies. The priests were the speculative class; their superior knowledge was natural power; superstition in the people and selfishness in the priest, cenverted that power into despotic tyranny. The military were the active caste; superior strength and skill gave them also a natural power. But he who alone in an age of barbarism can foretell an eclipse, or poison a flock of sheep, can subdue an army by these

Laws of Moses. Slavery in the East has in general been of a much milder character than in any other portion of the world. Wolf somewhere says the Greeks received this relic of barbarism from the Asiatics. If so, they made the evil institution worse than they found it. According to Burckhardt, it exists in a very mild form among the Mahometans, everywhere. Of course his remarks do not apply to the Turks, the most cruel of Mussulmen. Perhaps no code of *ancient* laws (to say nothing of modern legislation) was more humane than the Jewish in this respect.

* See Comte, Phil. positive, Vol. V. p. 186, et seq. On this subject of slavery in polytheistic nations, see Gibbon, Decline and Fall; ed. Paris, 1840, Vol. I. ch. II. p. 37, XXXVIII. p. 630, et seq., and the valuable notes of Milman and Guizot. For the influence of monotheism on this frightful evil, compare Schlosser, Geschichte der Alten Welt. Vol. III. Part III. ch. IX. § 2, et al.; in particular the story of Paulinus, and Deogratias, p. 284, et seq. and p. 334, et seq. p. 427, et seq.; and compare it with the conduct of Cato (as given by Plutarch, Life of Cato the Censor, and Schlosser, ubi sup. Vol. II. Part II. p. 189, et seq. Charles Comte, ubi sup. Liv. V.), and alas, with the conduct of the American Government and the commercial churches of our large towns in 1850–55.

means. At an early stage of polytheism, we find the political subject to the priestly power. The latter holds communion with the gods, whom none dare disobey. Romulus, Æacus, Minos, Moses, profess to receive their laws from God. To disobey them, therefore, is to incur the wrath of the powers that hold the thunder and lightning. Thus manners and laws, opinions and actions are subject to the same external authority. The theocratic governor controls the conscience and the passions of the people. Thus the radical evil arising from the confusion between the priests of different gods, was partially removed, for the spiritual and temporal power was lodged in the same hand.

In some nations the priesthood was inferior to the political power, as in Greece. Here the sacerdotal class held an inferior rank, from Homer's time to that of Laertius.* The genius of the nation demanded it; accordingly there sprang up a body of men, neither political, sacerdotal, nor military — the philosophers:† They could have found no place in any theocratic government but have done the world great religious service, building "wiser than they knew." It was comparatively easy for art, science, and all the great works of men, to go forward under such circumstances. Hence

* See Demosthenes, Cont. Near. Ch. XX. in Oratores Attici; Lond. 1828, Vol. VIII. p. 391, et seq. Aristot. Rep. III. 14. Opp. ed. Bekker, X. p. 87. See also César Cantu, Histoire Universelle; Paris, 1841–44, Vol. I. ch. XXVIII.–XXIX.; Constant, Liv. V. ch. V. and Brouwer's remarks thereon, p. 363, note.

† Perhaps none of the polytheistic nations offers an instance of the spiritual and temporal power existing in separate hands, when one party was entirely independent of the other. The separation of the two was reserved for a different age, and will be treated of in its place.

comes that wonderful development of mind in the country of Homer, Socrates, and Phidias. But in countries where the temporal was subject to the spiritual power, the reverse followed; there was no change without a violent revolution. The character of the nation becomes monotonous; science, literature, morals, cease to improve. When the nation goes down, it "falls like Lucifer, never to hope again." The story of Samuel affords us an instance, among the Jews, of the sacerdotal class, resisting, and successfully, the attempt to take away its power. Here the priest, finding there must be a king, succeeded at length in placing on the throne a "man after God's own heart," that is, one who would sacrifice as the priest allowed. The effort to separate the temporal from the spiritual power, to disenthrall mankind from the tyranny of sacerdotal corporations, is one of the great battles for the souls of the world. It begins early, and continues long. The contest shakes the earth in its time.

V. Another trait of the polytheistic period is the deification of men.* Fetichism makes gods of cattle; polytheism of men. This exaltation of men exerted great influence in the early stage of polytheism, when it was a real belief of the people and the priest, and not a verbal form, as in the decline of the old worship. Stout hearts could look forward to a wider sphere in

* See Farmer on the Worship of Human Spirits; London, 1783. Plutarch (Isis and Osiris), denies that human spirits were ever worshipped, but he is opposed by notorious facts. See Creutzer, ubi sup. p. 137, et seq. The deification of human beings, of course implied a belief in the immortality of the human soul, and is one of the many standing proofs of that belief. See Heyne's remarks, on Iliad, XXIII. 64 and 104, Vol. VIII. p. 368, 378, et seq.

the untrod world of spirit, where they should wield the sceptre of command, and sit down with the immortal gods, renewed in never ending youth. The examples of Æacus, Minos, Rhadamanthus, of Bacchus and Hercules — mortals promoted to the godhead, by merit, and not birth — crowned the ambition of the aspiring.* The kindred belief that the soul, dislodged from its "fleshly nook," still had an influence on the affairs of men, and came, a guardian spirit, to bless mankind, was a powerful auxiliary in a rude state of religious growth — a notion which has not yet faded out of the civilized world.† This worship seems unaccountable in our times; but when such men were supposed to be descendants of the gods, or born miraculously, and sustained by superhuman beings; or mediators between them and the human race; when it was believed they in life had possessed celestial powers, or were incarnations of some diety or heavenly spirit, the transition to their Apotheosis is less violent and absurd: it follows as a natural result. The divine being is more glorious when he has shaken off the robe of flesh.‡ Certain it is, this belief was clung to with astonishing tenacity, and, under several forms, still retains its place in the Christian church.§

* Pausanias touchingly complains that in his day mortals no longer became gods. See Lib. VII. Ch. 2. Opp. ed. Schubert and Walz. III. p. 9.

† The Christians began at an early age to imitate this, as well as other parts of the old polytheistic system. Eusebius, P. E. XIII. 11. Augustine, De Civ. Dei. VIII. 27.

‡ On this subject, see Meiners, ubi sup. Vol. I. B. III. Ch. I. and II.

§ See in Gibbon, Decline and Fall, Ch. XLVII. § II., the lament of Serapion at the loss of his *concrete Gods*. But it was only the *Arian* notions that deprived him of his finite God. Jerome condemns the Anthropomorphism of the Polytheists as

The moral effect of polytheism, on the whole, is difficult to understand. However, it is safe to say it is greater than that of fetichism. The constant evil of war in public, and slavery in private; the arbitrary character assigned to the gods; the influence of the priesthood, laying more stress on the ritual and the creed than on the life; the exceeding outwardness of many popular forms of worship; the constant separation made between religion and morality; the indifference of the priesthood, in Greece, their despotism in India,— do not offer a very favorable picture of the influence of polytheism in producing a beautiful life. Yet, on the other hand, the high tone of morality which pervades much of the literature of Greece, the reverential piety displayed by poets and philosophers, and still more the undeniable fact of characters in her story, rarely surpassed in nobleness of aim, and loftiness of attainment,— these things lead to the opinion that the moral influence of this worship, when free from the shackles of a sacerdotal caste, has been vastly underrated by Christian scholars.*

To trace the connection between the public virtue

stultissimam hæresin, but believed the divine incarnation in Jesus. See, also, Prudentius Apotheosis, Opp. I. p. 430, et seq.; London, 1824.

* The special influence of Polytheism upon morals, differed with the different forms it assumed. In India it sometimes led to rigid asceticism, and lofty contemplative quietism; in Rome to great public activity and manly vigor; in Greece, to a gay abandonment to the natural emotions; in Persia, to ascetic purity and formal devotion. On this subject see the curious and able, but one-sided and partial treatise of Tholuck on the Moral Influence of Heathenism, in the American Biblical Repository, Vol. II. He has shown up the dark side of Heathenism, but seems to have no true conception of ancient manners and life. See Ackermann, das Christliche in Plato, etc., Ch. I. (See below, note 2 and 1.)

and the popular theology, is a great and difficult matter, not to be attempted here. But this fact is plain, that in a rude state of life, this connection is slight, scarce perceptible; the popular worship represents fear, reverence it may be; perhaps a hope; or even trust. But the services it demands are rites and offerings, not a divine life. As civilization is advanced, religion claims a more reasonable service, and we find enlightened men, whom the spirit of God made wise, demanding only a divine life as an offering to him. Spiritual men, of the same elevation, see always the same spiritual truth. We notice a gradual ascent in the scale of moral ideas, from the time of Homer, through Solon, Theognis, the seven wise men, Pindar Æschylus, Sophocles, and the philosophers of their day.* The philosophers and sages of Greece and Rome recommend absolute goodness as the only perfect service of God. With them sin is the disease of the soul; virtue is health; a divine life the true good of mankind; perfection the aim. None have set forth this more ably.†

In the higher stages of polytheism, man is regarded as fallen. He felt his alienation from his Father. Religion looks back longingly to the golden age, when gods dwelt familiar with men. It seeks to restore the links broken out of the divine chain. Hence its sacrifices, and above all its mysteries,‡ both of which were

* See the proof of this in Brandis, Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. I. § 24, 25.

† See, on the moral culture of the Greeks, in special, Jacobs, Vermischte Schriften, Vol. III. p. 374. He has perhaps done justice to both sides of this difficult subject.

‡ Cicero, De Legg. II. See on this subject of the Mysteries in general, Lobeck, Aglaophamus, sive de Theologiæ mysticæ Causis, etc., Pars III., ch. III. IV. The mysteries seem sometimes to have offered beautiful symbols to aid man in return-

often abused, and made substitutes for holiness, and not symbols thereof.

When war is a normal state, and slavery is common, the condition of one half the human race is soon told. Woman is a tool or a toy. Her story is hitherto the dark side of the world. If a distinction be made between public morality, private morality, and domestic morality, it may safely be said that polytheism did much for the outward regulation of the two first, but little for the last. However, since there were gods that watched over the affairs of the household, a limit was theoretically set to domestic immorality, spite of the temptations which both slavery and public opinion spread in the way. When there were gods, whose special vocation was to guard the craftsmen of a certain trade, protect travelers, and defenceless men; when there were general, never dying avengers of wrong, who stopped at no goal but justice,— a bound was fixed, in some measure, to private oppression. Man, however, was not honored as man. Even in Plato's ideal state, the strong tyrannized over the weak; human selfishness wore a bloody robe: patriotism was greater than philanthropy: The popular view of sin and holiness was low. It was absurd for Mercury to conduct men to hell for adultery and lies. Heal thyself the shade might say. All pagan antiquity offers nothing akin to our lives of pious men.* It is true, as St. Augustine has well said, "that matter, which is now called the Christian religion, was in existence

ing to union with the Gods. Warburton, in spite of his erroneous views has collected much useful information on this subject: Divine Legation, Book II., § IV. But he sometimes sees out of him what existed only in himself.

* But see in Plutarch the singular story of Thespesius, his miraculous conversion, etc. De sera Numinis Vindicta, opp. II., Ch. XXVII. p. 563, et seq. ed. Xylander.

among the ancients; it has never been wanting, from the beginning of the human race." * There is but one Religion, and it can never die out. Unquestionably there were souls beautifully pious, and devoutly moral, who felt the kingdom of heaven in their bosoms, and lived it out in their lowly life. Still, it must be confessed the beneficial influence of the public worship of polytheists on public and private virtue, was sadly weak.† The popular life is determined, in some measure, by the popular conception of God, and that was low, and did not correspond to the pure idea of him;‡ still the sentiment was at its work.

But worship was more obviously woven up with public life under this form than under that which subsequently took its place. A wedding or a funeral, peace and war, seed-time and harvest, had each its religious rite. It was the mother of philosophy, of art, and science, though like Saturn in the fable, she sought to devour her own children, and met a similar and well-merited fate. Classic polytheism led to contentedness with the world as it was, and a sound cheerful enjoyment of its goodness and delight. Religion itself was glad and beautiful.§ But its idea of life

* Retract. I. 13. See also Civ. Dei. VIII. and Cont. Acad. III. 20.

† On the influence of the national *cultus*, see Athenaeus, Deipnosoph. VII. 65, 66. XIV. 24, et al.; Homeric Hymns I. vs. 147, et seq.

‡ Plato is seldom surpassed, in our day, in his conception of some of the qualities of the divine being. He was mainly free from that anthropomorphitic tendency which Christians have derived from the ruder portions of the Old Testament. See Rep. Lib. IV. passim. But neither he nor Aristotle — a yet greater man — ever attained the idea of a God who is the Author, or even the Master, of the material world. God and Matter were antagonistic forces, mutually hostile.

§ See the pleasant remarks of Plutarch on the cheerful character of public worship, Opp. Vol. II. p. 1101, et seq. ed.

was little higher than its fact. However that weakish cant and snivelling sentimentality of worship, which disgrace our day, were unknown at that stage.* The popular faith oscillated between unbelief and superstition. Plato wisely excluded the mythological poets from his ideal commonwealth. The character of the gods as it was painted by the popular mythology of Egypt, Greece, and India, like some of the legends of the Old Testament, served to confound moral distinctions, and encourage crime. Polytheists themselves confess it.† Yet a distinction seems often to have been made between the private and the official character of the deities. There was no devil, no pandemonium in ancient classic polytheism as in the modern church. Antiquity has no such disgrace to bear. Perhaps the poetic fictions about the gods were regarded always as fictions, and no more. Still this influence must have been pernicious.‡ It would seem, at first glance, that only strong intellectual insight, or great moral

Xylander, Strabo, Lib. X. Ch. III. IV. Opp. IV. p. 167, et seq. ed. Siebenkees and Tschucke.

* Many beautiful traits of Polytheism may be seen in Plutarch's Moral Works, especially the treatises on Superstition; That it is not possible to live well according to Epicurus; of Isis and Osiris; of the tardy vengeance of God. See the English Version; Lond. 1691, 4 vols. 8vo.

† Xenophanes, a contemporary of Pythagoras, censures Homer and Hesiod for their narratives of the gods, imputing to them what it was shameful for a man to think of. See Karsten, Phil. vett. Reliquia, Vol. I. p. 43, et seq. See Plato, Repub. II. p. 377. Pindar, Olymp. I. 28. But no religion was ever *designed* to favor impurity, even when it allows it in the gods. See the fine remarks of Seneca, De Vita beata, ch. XXVI. § 5–6. Even the gods were subject to the eternal laws. Fate punished Zeus for each offense. He smarted at home for his infidelity abroad.

‡ See the classic passages in Aristophanes, Clouds. 1065, et seq.

purity, or a happy combination of external circumstances could free men from the evil. However, in forming the morals of a people, it is not so much the doctrine that penetrates and moves the nation's soul, as it is the feeling of that sublimity which resides only in God, and of that enchanting loveliness which alone belongs to what is filled with God. Isocrates well called the mythological tales blasphemies against the gods. Aristophanes exposes in public the absurdities which were honored in the recesses of the temples. The priesthood in Greece has no armor of offence against ridicule.* But goodness never dies out of man's heart.

Mankind pass slowly from stage to stage:—

> "Slowly as spreads the green of Earth
> O'er the receding Ocean's bed,
> Dim as the distant Stars come forth,
> Uncertain as a vision fled,"

seems the gradual progress of the race. But in the midst of the absurd doctrines of the priests, and the immoral tales wherewith mistaken poets sought to adorn their conception of God, pure hearts beat, and lofty minds rose above the grovelling ideas of the temple and the market-place. The people who know not the law, are often better off than the sage or the soothsayer, for they know only what it is needed to know. "He is oft the wisest man that is not wise at all." Religion lies so close to men, that a pure heart and mind, free from prejudice, see its truths, its duties, and hopes. But before mankind passes from fetichism to

* It still remains unexplained how the Athenians, on a religious festival, could applaud the exhibitions of the comic drama, which exposed the popular mythology to ridicule, as it is done in the Birds of Aristophanes — to mention a single example — and still continue the popular worship.

pure monotheism, at a certain stage of religious progress, there are two subordinate forms of religious speculation, which claim the attention of the race, namely, dualism and pantheism. The one is the highest form of polytheism; the other a degenerate expression of monotheism, and both together form the logical tie between the two.

Dualism is the deification of two principles, the absolute good and the greatest evil. The origin of this form of religious speculation has been already hinted at.* Philosophically stated, it is the recognition of two absolute beings, the one supreme good, the other supreme evil. But this involves a contradiction: for if the good be absolute, evil is not, and the reverse. Another form, therefore, was invented. The good being was absolute and infinite; the evil principle was originally good, but did not keep his first estate. Here also was another difficulty: an independent and divine being cannot be mutable and frail, therefore the evil principle must of necessity be a dependent creature, and not divine in the proper sense. So a third form takes place, in which it is supposed that both the good and the evil are emanations from one absolute being, that evil is only negative and will at last end; that all wicked, as all good principles are subject to the Infinite God. At this point dualism coalesces with the doctrine of one god and dies its death. This system of dualism, in its various forms, has extended widely. It seems to have been most fully developed in Persia. It came early into the Christian church, and still retains its hold throughout the greater part of Christendom,

* See above, ch. IV.

though it is fast dying away before the advance of reason and faith.*

Pantheism has, perhaps, never been altogether a stranger to the world. It makes all things God, and God all things. This view seems at first congenial to a poetic and religious mind. If the world be regarded as a collection of powers,— the awful force of the storm, of the thunder, the earthquake; the huge magnificence of the ocean, in its slumber or its wrath; the sublimity of the ever during hills; the rocks, which resist all but the unseen hand of time; these might lead to the thought that matter is God. If men looked at the order, fitness, beauty, love, everywhere apparent in nature, the impression is confirmed. The all of things appears so beautiful to the comprehensive eye, that we almost think it is its own cause and creator. The animals find their support and their pleasure; the painted leopard and the snowy swan, each living by its own law; the bird of passage that pursues, from zone

* The doctrine of two principles is older than the time of Zoroaster. Hyde, Hist. Religion, vet. Persarum. Ch. IX. and XX. XXII. Bayle's Dictionary, article Zoroaster, Vol. V. p. 636. See also Cudworth, Ch. IV. § 13, p. 289, et seq., and Mosheim's Notes, Vol. I. p. 320, et seq. Rhode, Heilige Sage der Zendvolks, B. II. Ch. IX. X. XII. Brucker, Historia Philosophiæ, Vol. I. p. 176, et seq. Plutarch was a dualist though in a modified sense. See his Isis and Osiris, and Psychogonia. Marcion, among the early Christians, was accused of this belief, and indeed the existence of a devil is still believed by most Christian divines to be second only in importance to the belief of a God; at the very least a *scriptural doctrine, and of great value.* See a curious book of Mayer (Historia Diaboli), who thinks it a matter of *divine revelation.* See also the ingenious remarks of Professor Woods, in his translation of Knapp's Theology; New York, 1831, Vol. I. § 62–66, et seq. See the early forms of Dualism among the Christians in Beausobre, Histoire de Manichée et du Manichéisme, 2 Vols. 4to.

to zone, its unmarked path; the summer warbler which sings out its melodious existence in the woodbine; the flowers that come unasked, charming the youthful year; the golden fruit maturing in its wilderness of green; the dew and the rainbow; the frost flake and the mountain snow; the glories that wait upon the morning, or sing the sun to his ambrosial rest; the pomp of the sun at noon, amid the clouds of a June day; the awful majesty of night, when all the stars with a serene step come out, and tread their round, and seem to watch in blest tranquility about the slumbering world; the moon waning and waxing, walking in beauty through the night:— daily the water is rough with the winds; they come or abide at no man's bidding, and roll the yellow corn, or wake religious music at nightfall in the pines — these things are all so fair, so wondrous, so wrapt in mystery, it is no marvel that men say, This is divine; yes, the all is God; he is the light of the morning, the beauty of the noon, and the strength of the sun. The little grass grows by his presence. He preserveth the cedars. The stars are serene because he is in them. The lilies are redolent of God. He is the one; the all. God is the mind of man. The soul of all; more moving than motion; more stable than rest; fairer than beauty, and stronger than strength. The power of nature is God; the universe, broad and deep and high, a handful of dust, which God enchants. He is the mysterious magic that possesses the world. Yes, he is the all; the reality of all phenomena.

But an old writer thus pleasantly rebukes this conclusion, " Surely, vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen, know him that is . . . but deemed either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the

stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven, to be the gods which govern the world. With whose beauty if they being delighted took them to be gods; let them know how much better the Lord of them is, for the first Author of beauty had created them." *

To view the subject in a philosophical and abstract way, pantheism is the worship of all as God. He is the one and all; not conceived as distinct from the universe, nor independent of it. It is said to have prevailed widely in ancient times, and, if we may believe what is reported, it has not ended with Spinoza. It may be divided into two forms, material pantheism, sometimes called hylozoism, and spiritual pantheism, or psycho-zoism. Material pantheism affirms the existence of matter, but denies the existence of spirit, or any thing besides matter. Creation is not possible; the phenomena of nature and life are not the result of a "fortuitous concourse of atoms," as in atheism, but

* Wisdom of Solomon, Ch. XIII. 1, et seq. At the present day Pantheism seems to be the bugbear of some excellent persons. They see it everywhere except on the dark walls of their own churches. The disciples of Locke find it in all schools of philosophy but the Sensual; the followers of Calvin see it in the liberal churches. It has become dangerous to say "*God is Spirit;*" a *definite* God, whose *personality we understand,* is the orthodox article. M. Maret, in his Essai sur le Panthéisme dans les Sociétés modernes; Paris, 1840, 1 vol. 8vo, finds it the natural result of Protestantism, and places before us the pleasant alternatives, either the Catholic Church or Pantheism! Preface, p. xv. et al. The rationalism of the nineteenth century must end in scepticism, or leap over to Pantheism! According to him all the philosophers of the spiritual school in our day are Pantheists.— Formerly divines condemned Philosophy because it had *too little* of God; now because it has *too much.* It would seem difficult to get the orthodox medium; too much and too little are found equally dangerous. See the pleasant remarks of Hegel on this charge of Pantheism, Encyclopädie der philosoph. Wissenschaften, etc., third edition, § 573.

of laws in nature itself. Matter is in a constant flux; but it changes only by laws which are themselves immutable. Of course this does not admit God as the absolute or infinite, but the sum total of material things; He is limited both to the extension and the qualities of matter; He is merely immanent therein, but does not transend material forms. This seems to have been the pantheism of Strato of Lampsacus, of Democritus, perhaps of Hippocrates, and as some think, though erroneously, of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and, in general, of the Eleatic philosophers in Greece,* and of many others whose tendency is more spiritual.† Its philosophic form is the last result of an attempt to form an adequate *conception* of God. It has sometimes been called Kosmo-theism, (World-Divinity), but it gives us a world without a God.

Spiritual pantheism affirms the existence of spirit, and sometimes, either expressly, or by implication, denies the existence of matter. This makes all spirit God; always the same, but ever unfolding into new forms, and therefore a perpetual *becoming;* God is the absolute substance, with these two attributes — thought and extension. He is self-conscious in men; without self-consciousness in animals. Before the crea-

* See Karsten, ubi sup. Vol. I. and II. See the opinions of these men ably summed up by Ritter, Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. I. B. V. and Brandis, ubi sup. Vol. I. § 66–72. Cudworth has many fine observations on this sort of Pantheism, Vol. I. Ch. IV. § 15–26, and elsewhere. He denies that this school make the deity corporeal, and charges this upon others. See Ch. III.

† See Jäsche, Der Pantheismus, etc. Vols. II. and III. passim, and the histories of Philosophy. If a man is curious to detect a pantheistic tendency he will find it in the *Soul of-the-world,* among the ancients, in the *Plastic Nature* of Cudworth, or the *Hylarchic Principle* of Henry More.

tion of men he was not *self*- conscious. All beside God is devoid of substantiality. It is not but only APPEARS; its *being* is its *being seen*. This is psycho-theism (Soul Divinity). It gives us a God without a world, and He is the only cause that exists, the sum-total of spirit; immanent in spirit but not transcending spiritual manifestations. This was the pantheism of Spinoza and some others. It lies at the bottom of many mystical discourses, and appears, more or less, in most of the pious and spiritual writers of the middle ages, who confound the divine being with their own personality, and yet find some support for their doctrines in the language, more or less figurative, of the New Testament.

This system appears more or less, in the writings of John the Evangelist, in Dionysius the Areopagite, and the many authors who have drawn from him. It tinges in some measure the spiritual philosophy of the present day.* But the charge of pantheism is very vague, and is usually urged most by such as know little of its meaning. He who conceives of God, as transcending creation indeed, but yet at the same time, as the Immanent Cause of all things, as infinitely present, and

* See the curious forms this assumes in Theologia Mystica . . . speculativa . . . et affectiva, per Henric, Harph. etc.; Colon. 1538. Jäsche and Maret find it in all the modern spiritual philosophy. Indeed the two rocks that threaten theology seem to be a Theosophy which resolves all into God, and Anthropomorphism, which in fact denies the infinite. This mystical tendency, popularly denominated Pantheism, appears in the ancient religions of the East; it enters largely into the doctrine of the *Sufis*, a Mahometan sect. See Tholuck, Blüthensammlung aus der morgenlandischen Mystik, p. 33, et seq. and passim. Von Hammer also, in his Geschichte der schönen Redekunste Persens, etc. p. 340 et seq. 347, et seq. et al. gives extracts from these Oriental speculators who are more or less justly charged with Pantheism.

infinitely active, with no limitations, is sure to be called a pantheist in these days, as he would have passed for an Atheist two centuries ago. Some who have been called by this easy but obnoxious name, both in ancient and modern times, have been philosophical defenders of the doctrine of one God, but have given him the historical form neither of Brahma nor Jehovah.*

III. Monotheism is the worship of one Supreme God. It may admit numerous divine beings superior to men, yet beneath the Supreme Divinity, as the Jews, the Mahometans, and the Christians have done; or it may deny these subsidiary beings, as some philosophers have taught. The idea of God to which monotheism ultimately attains, is that of a Being infinitely powerful, wise, and good. He may, however, be supposed to manifest himself in *one form* only, as the Jehovah of the Hebrews, and the Allah of the Mahometans; in *three forms*, as the Triune God of most Christians; or in *all forms*, as the Pan and Brahma of the Greek and Indian — for it is indifferent whether we ascribe no form or all forms to the Infinite.

* The writings of Spinoza have hitherto been supposed to contain the most pernicious form of Pantheism; but of late, the poison has been detected also in the works of Schleiermacher, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Cousin, not to mention others of less note. Pantheism is a word of convenient ambiguity, and serves as well to express the *theological odium* as the more ancient word Atheism, which has been deemed by some synonymous with Philosophy. See the recent controversial writings of Mr. Norton and Mr. Ripley, respecting the Pantheism of Spinoza and Schleiermacher. It has been well said, the question between the alleged Pantheist and the pure Theist, is simply this: *Is God the immanent cause of the World, or is he not?* See Sengler Die Idee Gottes. B. I. p. 10, 107, 899.

Since the form of monontheism prevails at this day, little need be said to portray its most important features.* It annihilates all distinction of nations, tribes, and men. There is one God for all mankind. He has no favorites, but is the equal Father of them all. War and slavery are repugnant to its spirit, for men are brothers. There is no envy, strife, or confusion in the divine consciousness, to justify hostility among men; He hears equally the prayer of all and gives them infinite good at last. No priesthood is needed to serve Him. Under fetichism every man could have access to his God, for divine symbols were more numerous than men; miracles were performed every day; inspiration was common, but of little value; the favor of the gods was supposed to give a wonderful and miraculous command over Nature. Under polytheism, only a chosen few had direct access to God; an appointed priesthood; a sacerdotal caste. They stood between men and the gods. Divine symbols became more rare. Inspiration was not usual; a miracle was a most uncommon thing; the favorites of heaven were children born of the gods; admitted to intercourse with them, or enabled by them to do wonderful works. Now monontheism would restore inspiration to all. By representing God as spiritual and omnipresent, it brings him within every man's reach; by making Him infinitely perfect, it shows his wisdom, love, and will always the same. Therefore, it annihilates favoritism and all capricious miracles. Inspiration, like the sunlight, awaits all who will accept its conditions. All are Sons of God; they only are his favored ones who serve him best. No day, nor spot, nor deed, is exclusively sacred; but all time, and each place, and every noble act. The created all is a symbol of God.

* Sermons of Theism, etc. Sermon V. and VI.

But here also human perversity and ignorance have done their work; have attempted to lessen the symbols of the deity; to make him of difficult access; to bar up the fountain of truth and source of light still more than under polytheism, by the establishment of places and times, of rituals and creeds; by the appointment of exclusive priests to mediate, where no mediator is needed or possible; by the notion that God is capricious, revengeful, uncertain, partial to individuals or nations; by taking a few doctrines and insisting on exclusive belief; by selecting a few from the many alleged miracles, insisting that these, and these alone shall be accepted, and thus making the religious duty of men arbitrary and almost contemptible. Still, however, no human ignorance, no perversity, no pride of priest or king, can long prevent this doctrine from doing its vast and beautiful work. It struggles mightily with the sin and superstition of the world, and at last will overcome them.

The history of this doctrine is instructive. It was said above there were three elements to be considered in this matter, namely, the sentiment of God; the idea of God; and the conception of God. The sentiment is vague and mysterious, but always the same thing in kind, only felt more or less strongly, and with more or less admixture of foreign elements. The idea is always the same in itself, as it is implied and writ in man's constitution; but is seen with more or less of a distinct consciousness. Both of these lead to unity to monotheism, and accordingly, in the prayers and hymns, the festivals and fasts of fetichists and polytheists we find often as clear and definite intimations of monotheism, as in the devotional writings of professed monotheists. In this sense the doctrine is old as

human civilization, and has never been lost sight of. This is so plain it requires no proof. But the conception of God, which men superadd to the sentiment and idea of him, is continually changing with the advance of the world, of the nation, or the man. We can trace its historical development in the writings of priests, and philosophers, and poets, though it is impossible to say when and where it was first taught with distinct philosophical consciousness, that there is one God; one only. The history of this subject demands a treatise by itself.* This, however, is certain, that we find signs and proofs of its existence among the earliest poets and philosophers of Greece; in the dim remnants of Egyptian splendor; in the uncertain records of the East; in the spontaneous effusions of savage hearts, and in the most ancient writings of the Jews. The latter have produced such an influence on the world, that their doctrine requires a few words on this point.

* Meiners, in his work, Historia Doctrinæ de vero Deo, etc.; 1 vol. 12mo, 1780 (which, though celebrated, is a passionate and one-sided book, altogether unworthy of the subject, and "behind the times" of its composition), maintains that the heathens knew nothing of the one God till about 3554 years after the creation of the world, when Anaxagoras helped them to his doctrine. See, on the other hand, the broad and philosophical views of Cudworth, Ch. IV. passim, who, however, seems sometimes to push his hypothesis too far. A history of Monotheism is still to be desired, though Tenneman, Ritter, Brandis, and even Brücker, have collected many facts, and formed valuable contributions to such a work. Münscher has collected valuable passages from the Fathers, relating to the history of the doctrine among the Christians, and their controversies with the heathen, in his Lehrbuch der Christlichen Dogmengeschichte, 3d ed. by Von Cöln, Vol. I. Ch. VI. § 52, et seq. But Warburton, who wrote like an attorney, gives the most erroneous judgments upon the ancient heathen doctrine respecting the unity of God. See the temperate remarks of Mosheim, De Recusante, Constant, etc., p. 17, et seq.

The deity was conceived of by the Hebrews as entirely separate from nature; this distinguishes Judaism from all forms which had a pantheistic tendency, and which deified matter or men. He was the primitive ground and cause of all. But the Jewish religion did not, with logical consistency, deny the existence of other gods, inferior to the highest. Here we must consider the doctrine of the *Jewish books*, and that of the *Jewish people*. In the first the reality of other dieties is generally assumed. The first commandment of the decalogue implies the existence of other gods. The mention of Sons of God who visited the daughters of men;* of the divine council or host of heaven;† the contract Jacob makes with Jehovah;‡ the frequent reference to strange gods; the preëminence claimed for Jehovah above all the deities of the other nations §— these things show that the mind of the writers was not decided in favor of the exclusive existence of Jehovah. The people and their kings before the exile were strongly inclined to a mingled worship of fetichism and polytheism, a medium between the ideal religion of Moses and the actual worship of the Canaanites. It is difficult in the present state of critical investigation, to determine nicely the date of all the different books of the Jews, but this may be safely said, that the early books have more of a polytheistic tendency than the writings of the later prophets, for at length, both

* Gen. VI. 2.

† Gen. III. 22; 1 Kings XXII. 19; Job II. 1.

‡ Gen. XXVIII. 20, 22, comp. Herodotus, IV. 179.

§ See the numerous passages where Jehovah is spoken of as the chief of the Gods: 2 Chr. II. 5; Ps. XCV. XCVII. 7, et seq.; Ex. XII. 12, XV. 11, XVIII. 11, etc., etc. Strabo, ubi sup. Lib. XVI. Ch. II. § 35, gives a strange account of the Jewish theology.

the learned and the unlearned became pure monotheists.* At first Jehovah and the Elohim seem to be recognized as joint gods;† but at the end Jehovah is the *only god.*

But the character assigned him is fluctuating. He is always the creator and Lord of heaven and earth, yet is not always represented as the father of all nations, but of the Jews only, who will punish the heathens with the most awful severity.‡ In some parts of the Old Testament he is almighty, omnipresent, and omniscient; eternal and unalterable. But in others he is represented with limitations in respect to all these attributes. Not only are the sensual perceptions of a man ascribed to him, for this is unavoidable in popular speech, but he walks on the earth, eats with Abraham, wrestles with Jacob, appears in a visible form to Moses, tempts men, speaks in human speech, is pleased with the fragment sacrifice, sleeps and awakes, rises early in the morning; is jealous, passionate, revengeful.§

* Compare with the former passages, Jer. II. 26–28; Isa. XLIV. 6–20; Deut. IV. 28, et seq., XXXII. 16, 17, 39; Ps. CXV. CXXXV. and Ecclesiasticus XXXIII. 5, XLIII. 28; Wisdom of Sol. XII. 13; Baruch III. 35. See de Wette, Bib. Dogmatik, § 97, et seq., and 149, et seq., who has collected some of the most important passages. See too his Wesen des Glaubens, etc., § 14, p. 72 et seq.

† See Bauer, Dicta, Classica, V. T. etc.; 1798, Vol. I. § 41, et seq. See also the treatise of Stahl on the Appearances of God, etc. in Eichhorn, Bibliothek der Bib. Lit. Vol. VII. p. 156, et seq.

‡ See an able article on "the Relation of Jehovah to the Heathen," in Eichhorn, ubi sup. Vol. VIII. p. 222, et seq. See Ammon, Fortbildung des Christenthums; Leip. 1836, et seq. Vol. I. Book I. ch. I.

§ Lessing well says, the Hebrews proceeded from the conception of the *most powerful* God to that of the *only* God, but remained for a long time far below the true transcendent notion of the one true God. "Education of the human race," Werke;

However, in other passages the loftiest attributes are assigned him. He is the God of infinite love; father of all, who possesses the the earth and heavens.

The conception which a man forms of God, depends on the character and attainment of the man himself; this differed with individual Jews as with the Greeks, the Christians, and the Mahometans. However, this must be confessed, that under the guidance of divine providence, the great and beautiful doctrine of one god for the Hebrews seems very early embraced by the great Jewish lawgiver; incorporated in his national legislation; and defended with rigorous enactions. At our day it is difficult to understand the service rendered to the human race by the mighty soul of Moses, and that a thousand years before Anaxagoras.* His name is ploughed into the history of the world. His influence can never die. It must have been a vast soul, endowed with moral and religious genius to a degree extraordinary among men, which at that early age

ed. 1824. Vol. XXIV. p. 43–4. See also on this subject of Hebrew Theism, the valuable but somewhat one-sided views of Vatke, Bib. Theologie, Vol. I. § 44, et seq. But see also Salvador, Hist. des Institutions de Möise, etc.; Brussels, 1830. Vol. III. p. 175, et seq.

At first Christian artists found it in bad taste and even heathenish to paint the almighty in any form. Then, in decorating churches and MSS. with pictures drawn from O. S. stories, they often put only a *hand* for God, or omitting that, put Christ for the Father. See Didron, Iconographie Chrétienne; Paris, 1843, p. 174, et seq. See the nice distinction made by John of Damascus in regard to images of God, Orat. I. in Imaginibus; Opp. ed. Basil, 1574, p. 701, et seq. et al. Before the twelfth century it seems there were no pictures of God from Christian artists. Afterwards the Italians painted him as a *Pope;* the Germans as an *Emperor,* the French and English as a *King.* Didron, ubi sup. p. 230, et seq.

* Constant, Liv. IV. ch. XI. has some just remarks on the excellence of the Hebrew theology.

could attempt to found a state on the doctrine and worship of one national God.

Was he the first of the come-outers? Or had others, too far before the age for its acceptance, perished before him in the greatness of their endeavor? History is silent.* But the bodies of many prophets must be rolled into the gulf that yawns wide and deep between the ideal and the actual, before the successful man comes in the fulness of time, at God's command, to lead men into the promised land, reaping what they did not sow. These men have risen up in all countries and every time. In the rudest ages as in the most refined, they look through the glass of nature, seeing clearly the invisible things of God, and by the things that are made and the feelings felt, understanding his eternal power and godhead. They adored him as the spirit who dwells in the sun, looks through the stars, speaks in the wind, controls the world, is chief of all powers, animal, material, spiritual, and father of all men — their dear and blessed God. In his light they loved to live, nor feared to die.

There is a great advance from the fetichism of the Canaanite to the theism of Moses; from the rude conceptions of the New Zealander to the refined notions of an enlightened Christian. Ages of progress and revolution seem to separate them, so different is their theology. Yet the religion of each is the same, distinguished only by the more and less. The change

* It is difficult to determine accurately the date of events in Chinese history, such are the pretensions of Chinese scholars on the one hand, and such the bigoted scepticism of dogmatists on the other; but see the Chinese Classical Work, commonly called the Four Books, translated by David Pollie; Malacca, 1829, 1 vol. 8vo. See Cantu, ubi sup. Vol. III. ch. XXI. et seq.

from one of these three religious types to the other is slow; but attended with tumult, war, and suffering. In the ancient civilized nations, little is known of their passage from fetichism to polytheism. It took place at an early age of the world, before written documents were common. We have, therefore, no records to verify this passage in the history of the Greeks, Egyptians, or Hebrews. Yet in the earliest periods of each of these nations we find monuments which show that fetichism was not far off, and furnish a lingering but imperfect evidence of the fierce struggle which had gone on. The wrecks of fetichism strew the shores of Greece and Egypt. Judea furnishes us with some familiar examples.*

In the patriarchal times, if we may trust the mythical stories in Genesis, we find sacred stones which seem to be fetiches, stone-pillars,† idolatry,‡ worship of Ramphan and Chiun while in Egypt and the desert;§ the golden calf of Aaron and that of Jeroboam;|| and the goats that were worshipped in the wilderness.¶

* The legendary character of the Pentateuch renders it unsafe to depend entirely on its historical statements. Many passages seem to have been originally designed, or at least retouched, by some one who sought to enhance the difference between Moses and the people. Still, the "general drift" of the tradition is not to be mistaken, and can scarcely be wrong. The testimony of the prophets respecting the early state of the nation, is more valuable than that of the Pentateuch itself. See De Wette, Introduction to the O. T., tr. by Theo. Parker; Boston, 1843, Vol. II. passim. See too, Ewald, Geschichte des Volks Israel, Vol. I.; Gött., 1843.

† Gen. XXVIII. 18, XXXV. 14.

‡ Gen. XXXI. 19, XXXV. 1–4.

§ See Josh. XXIV. 14; Ezek. XX. 7, et seq. XXIII. 3; Amos, V. 25, 26; Exod. XXXII. 1; Lev. XVII.

|| Exod. XXXII. 1–6; 1 Kings XII. 28; Ezek. I. 10, and X. 14.

¶ Levit. XVII. 7. *Devils,* in our version.

Besides, we find the worship of the serpent,* a relic of the superstition of Egypt or Phœnicia; the worship of Baal in its various forms;† of Astarte "Heaven's Queen and Mother;" of Thammuz, and Moloch;‡ all of which seem to be remains of fetichism.§ In the very law itself we find traces of fetichism. The prohibition of certain kinds of food, garments, and sacrifices; the forms of divination, the altars, feasts, sacrifices, scape-goat, the ornaments of the priest's dress, all seem to have grown out of the rude worship that formerly prevailed. The old idolatry was spiritualized, its forms modified and made to serve for the worship of Jehovah. The frequent relapses of king and people prove, on the one hand, that the nation was slowly emerging out of a state of great darkness and superstition, and, on the other, that lofty minds and noble hearts were toiling for their civilization.

For many centuries a most bloody contention went on between the ideal monotheism and the actual idolatry; at times it was a war of extermination. This

* Numb. XXI. 4–9;

† I Kings XVIII. 33, 26, 28; XIX. 18; Jerem. XIX. 5; 2 Kings I. 2; Judges VIII. 33, IX. 4, 46; Numb. XXV. 1, et seq.

‡ I Kings XI. 33; Jerem. VII. 18; Judges II. 13, X. 6; 2 Kings XXIII. 7, Levit. XIX. 29; Deut XXIII. 18; Ezek. VIII. 14; 2 Kings XXIII. 5, XVII. 16, XXI. 3, 5; Deut. IV. 19, XVII. 3; 2 Kings XXIII. 10; Levit. XVIII. 21, XX. 2, et seq.; Deut. XVIII. 10; Jerem. VII. 31, XIX. 5, XXXII. 35. See the testimony of the ancients and remarks of the learned on this subject in De Wette, Archäologie, etc., § 191, et seq. and § 231, et seq. Vatke goes too far in his explanations, § 21–27; but his book is full of valuable thoughts.

§ There is a remarkable passage, though of but four words, in Hosea, XIII. 2, which shows that one of the worst vices of Fetichism still prevailed in his time, *saying, "They that sacrifice a man shall kiss the calves,"* i. e. the Idols of the People. This is not the common translation — but it seems to me the true one.

shows how difficult it is to introduce monotheism before the people are ready to receive it. They must wait till they attain the requisite moral and intellectual growth. Before this is reached, they can receive it but in name, and are detained from the ruder, and to them more congenial form, only at the expense of most rigorous laws, suffering, and bloodshed. Before the exile the Hebrews constantly revolted; afterwards they never returned to the ruder worship, but ten tribes of the nation were gone forever.*

In the more recent conflict of monotheism and polytheism, the history of the Christian and Mahometan religions shows what suffering is endured first by the advocates of the new, and next by those of the old faith, before the rude doctrine could give place to the better. War and extermination do their work, and remove the unbelieving. Many a country has been Christianized or Mahometanized by the sword. These things have taken place within a few centuries; when the conquering religion was called Christianity. Are the wars of Charlemagne forgotten? Go back thousands of years, to the strife between sacerdotal polytheism and fetichism, when each was a more bloody faith, and imagination cannot paint the horrors of the struggle.

Now, each of these forms represent an idea of the popular consciousness which passed for a truth, or it could not be embraced; for a great truth, or it would not prevail widely; yes, for all of truth, the man could receive at the time he embraced it. We creep before

* See Newman's Hebrew Monarchy. Lond. 1847, ch. IX. Ewald ubi sup. B. II. p. 92, et seq. Anhang zum 2ten Band. III. (1) p. 197, et seq.

walking. Mankind has likewise an infancy, though it will at length put away childish things. Each of these forms did the world service in its day. Its truth was permanent; its error, the result of the imperfect development of man's faculties. It happens in religious as in scientific matters, that doctrine contains both truth and falsehood. It is accepted for its truth or the appearance of truth. At first the falsehood does little harm, for it comes in contact with no active faculty in man which detects it.* But gradually the truth does its work; elevates those who receive it; new faculties awake; the falsehood is seen to be false. The free man would gladly reject it. But the priesthood, whom interest chains to the old form, though false; or the people, not yet elevated enough to see the truth,— will not allow a man to separate the false from the true. They say to the prophet and the sage, "Thou shalt accept the old doctrine as we and our fathers. It is from God; the only rule. Unless thou accept it on the same authority, and in the same way as ourselves, we will burn thee and thy children with fire. Thou mayst

* We often see the most strange inconsistency between a man's conduct and his creed. Roman Lucretia sacrificed to Venus. The worshipper of Jupiter did not imitate his vices; nor does the modern devotee of some unholy creed, with a Christian name, become what the creed logically demands. A man may hold doctrines which render virtue nugatory; which make the flesh creep with horror; and yet live a divine life, or be gay even to frivolity. The late Dr. Hopkins was a striking illustration of this statement. So long as the religious sentiment preponderates, the false doctrine fails of its legitimate effect. See some judicious observations on this theme in Constant, Liv. I. Ch. III. IV., and Polythéisme Rom. Vol. I. p. 59–81.

M. Comte, Vol. V. p. 280, thinks the doctrine of pure Monotheism is perfectly sterile and incapable of becoming the basis of a true religious system! Judging only from experience, his conclusion is utterly false. But such as might be expected from

live as likest thee; thou shalt believe with us." The free man replies, "Burn then if thou wilt: but truth thou canst not burn down. A lie thou canst not build up. God does not die with his children, nor truth with its martyrs."

Then as truth is stronger than every lie, and he that has her is mightier than all men, so the fagot of martyrdom proves the fire-pillar of the human race, guiding them from the bondage and darkness of Egypt to the land of liberty and light. Truth, armed with her arrows to smite, her olive to bless, spreads wide her wings amid the outcry of the priest and the king. At last error goes down to the ground, but because honored beyond her time, takes with her temple and tower in her fall.

The truth represented by fetichism is this: The unknown God is present in matter; spiritual power is the strongest of forces. Its error was to make matter God. The truth of polytheism is: God is present and active, everywhere; in space, in spirit; breathes in the wind; speaks in the storm; inspires to acts of virtue;

one who is, as he *boasts,* "equally free from Fetischistic, Polytheistic, and Monotheistic prejudices." He looks longingly to a time when all theism shall have passed away, and the "hypothesis of a God" become exploded! But the true man of science is of all men most modest and reverent. He who has followed Newton through the wondrous soaring of his genius comes grateful to that swan-song, beautiful as it is sublime, with which he finishes his flight, and sings of the ONE CAUSE, ETERNAL and INFINITE, who rules the all. It cannot be read without a tear of joy. Principia; ed. 1833, Vol. IV. p. 199, 201. *"Et hi omnes,"* etc. etc. See too the beautiful and pious conclusion of Mr. Whewell to his Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, Vol. III. p. 582–3. And the remarks of Descartes, Meditations, Med. 3, ad finem. It was worthy of Linnæus to say, as he looked at a little flower, *Deum Sempiternum, omniscium, omnipotentem, â tergo transeuntem vidi et obstupui.*

helps the efforts of all true men. Its falsehood was, that it divided God, and gave but a chaos of deity. When the falsehood was seen and felt to be such, and its truth believed in for itself, on its own authority, then was the time for fetichism and polytheism to fall. So they fell, never to hope again, for mankind never apostatizes. One generation takes up the Ark of religion where another let it fall, and carries forward the hope of the world. The old form never passes away, till all its truth is transferred to the new. These types of religious progress, are but the frames on which the artist spreads the canvas, while he paints his piece. The frame may perish when this is done. Fetichism and polytheism did good, not because they were fetichism and polytheism, but because religion was in them and they were steps in the spiritual progress of mankind — indispensable steps.

Such, then, are the three great forms of manifestation assumed by this religious element. We cannot understand the mental and religious state of men who saw the divine in a serpent, a cat, or an enchanted ring; not even that of superstitious Christians, who make earth a demon-land, and the one God but a king of devils. Yet each religious doctrine has sometime stood for truth. It was devised to help pious hearts, and has imperfectly accomplished its purpose. It could not have been but as it was. Looking carelessly at the past, the history of man's religious consciousness appears but a series of revolutions. What is to-day built up with prayers and tears, is to-morrow pulled down with shouting and bloodshed, giving place to a new fabric equally transient. Prophets were mistaken, and saints confounded. Religious history is the

tale of confusion. But looking deeper, we see it is a series of developments, all tending towards one great and beautiful end, the harmonious perfection of man; that in theology as in other science, in morals as in theology, the circle of his vision becomes wider continually; his opinions more true; his ideal more fair and sublime. Each form that has been, bore its justification in itself; an evil that "God winked at," to use the bold figure of a great man. It was natural and indispensable in its time and place; a part of the scheme of agencies provided from before the foundation of the world. Each form may perish; but its truth never dies. Nations pass away. A handful of red dust alone marks the spot where a metropolis opened its hundred gates; but religion does not perish. Cities and nations mark the steps of her progress. A nation, at the head of the civilized world, organizes religion as well as it can; perpetuates and diffuses its truth, and thus preaches the advent of a higher faith, and prepares its way. Each failure is a prophecy of the perfect. But the change from faith to faith is attended with persecution on the one side, and martyrdom on the other. A little philosophy turns men from religion. Much knowledge restores them to their faith, to the bosom of piety. The great men of the world, men gifted with the deepest insight, and living the most royal life, have been man's pioneers in these steps of progress. Moses, Hermes, Confucius, Budha, Zoroaster, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, have lent their holy hands in man's greatest work. Religion filled their soul with strength and light. It is only little men, that make wide the mouth, and draw out the tongue at pure and genuine piety and nobleness of heart. Shall we not judge the world, as a rose, by its best side? God, of

his wisdom, raises up men of religious genius; heaven-sent prophets; born fully armed and fitted for their fearful work. They have an eye to see through the reverend hulls of falsity; to detect the truth a long way off. They send their eagle gaze far down into the heart; far on into the future, thinking for ages not yet born. The word somes from God with blessed radiance upon their mind. They must speak the tidings from on high, and shed its beamy light on men around, till the heavy lids are opened, and the sleepy eye beholds. But alas for him who moves in such work. If there be not superhuman might to sustain him; if his soul be not naked of selfishness, he will say often, "Alas for me! Would God my mother had died or ever I was born to bear all the burdens of the world, and right its wrongs." He that feareth the Lord — when was not he a prey? He must take his life in his hand, and become as a stranger to men. But if he fall and perish, it is his gain. Is it not also the world's? It is the burning wood that warms men.

In passing judgment on these different religious states, we are never to forget, that there is no monopoly of religious emotion by any nation or any age. He that worships truly, by whatever form, worships the only God; He hears the prayer, whether called Brahma, Jehovah, Pan, or Lord; or called by no name at all. Each people has its prophets and its saints; and many a swarthy Indian, who bowed down to wood and stone; many a grim-faced Calmuck, who worshipped the great God of Storms; many a Grecian peasant, who did homage to Phœbus-Apollo when the sun rose or went down; yes, many a savage, his hands smeared all over with human sacrifice, shall come from the East and the West, and sit down in the kingdom of God,

with Moses and Zoroaster, with Socrates and Jesus, — while men, who called daily on the only living God, who paid their tribute and bowed at the name of Christ, shall be cast out, because they did no more. Men are to be judged by what is given, not what is withheld.

CHAPTER VI

OF CERTAIN DOCTRINES CONNECTED WITH RELIGION. I. OF THE PRIMITIVE STATE OF MANKIND. II. OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

I. *Of the Primitive State of Mankind.*

Various theories have been connected with religion, respecting the origin and primitive condition of the human race. Many nations have claimed to be the primitive possessors of their native soil; Autochthones, who sprang miraculously out of the ground, were descended from stones, grasshoppers, emmets or other created things. Others call themselves children of the gods.* Some nations trace back their descent to a time of utter barbarism, whence the gods recalled them; others start from a golden age, as the primitive condition of men.† The latter opinion prevailed with the Hebrews, from whom the Christians have derived

* Diodorus Siculus says, somewhere, all ancient nations claim to be the *most ancient.*

† See the heathen view of this in Hesiod, Opera et Dies. Lucretius, V. 923, et seq. Virgil, Georg. I. 125, et seq. Ecl. IV. Ovid, Met. I. 89, et seq. Plato, Polit, p. 271, et seq. See Heyne, Opusc. Vol. III. p. 24, et seq. Hesiod's Theog. 521–579. See other parallels in Bauer's Mythologie des A. T. etc. Vol. I. p. 85, et seq. See also the curious speculations of Eichhorn (Urgeschichte ed. Gabler.); Büttmann (Mythologus), and Hartmann (über des Pentateuch). Compare Rosenmüller, Alterthumskunde, Vol. I. Part I. p. 180, et seq. and the striking passage in Kleuker's Zendavesta, Vol. II. p. 211, 227, et seq.; III. p. 85. See Rhode's remarks upon the passages, ubi sup., p. 388, et seq. See Bauer, Dicta Classica, § 52.

it. According to them, the primitive state was one of the highest felicity, from which men fell; the primitive worship, therefore, must have been the normal religion of mankind.*

This question then presents itself: From what point did the human race set out; from civilization and the true worship of God, or from cannibalism and the deification of nature? Has the human race fallen or risen? This question is purely historical, and to be answered by historical witnesses. But in the presence, and still more in the absence, of such witnesses, the *à priori* doctrines of the man's philosophy affect his decision. Reasoning with no facts is easy, as all motion *in vacuo*. The analogy of the geological formation of the earth; its gradual preparation, so to say, for the reception of plants and animals, the ruder first, and then the more complex and beautiful, till at last she opens her bosom to man,— this, in connection with many similar analogies, would tend to show that a similar order was to be expected in the affairs of men; development from the lower to the higher and not the reverse.† In strict accordance with this analogy, some have taught that man was created in the lowest stage of savage life; his religion the rudest worship of nature; his morality that of the cannibal; that all of the civilized races have risen from this point, and gradually passed through fetichism and polytheism, before they reached refinement and true religion; the spiritual

* See the opinions of *Zoroaster* on this point collected by Bretschneider, Darstellung der Dogmatik, etc., der Apoc. Schriften, Vol. I. § 52, p. 286, et seq.

† See Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation; Lond. 1844, 1st ed. p. 277, et seq. for some curious remarks.

man is the gradual development of germs latent in the natural man.*

Another party, consisting more of poets and dogmatists than of philosophers, teaches the opposite doctrine, that a single human pair was created in the full majority of their powers, with a perfect morality and religion; that they *fell* from this state, and while some few kept alive the lamp of truth, and pased it on from hand to hand, that the mass sunk into barbarity and sin, whence they are slowly emerging aided, of course,

* See Comte, Vol. V. p. 32, et al. Here arises the kindred question, Have all the human race descended from a single pair, or started up in the various parts of the earth where we find them? The first opinion has been defended by the Christian church, in general with more obstinacy than argument. Pritchard, ubi sup., derives all from one stock, and collects many interesting facts relative to the human race in various conditions. But the unity of the race is not to be made out *genealogically*. It is *essential to the nature* of mankind. Augustine has some curious speculations on this head, De civitate Dei. XII. 21. XIII. 19–23. XIV. 10–12, 16–26. Lactantius, Institut. II. 11. VII. 4. See the opinions of Buddeus, and the curious literature he cites, Hist. Ecclesiast. V. T. Vol. I. p. 92, et seq. On the other hand, Palfrey's Academical Lectures, Vol. II. Lect. XXI.–XXII. Kant, von der Racen der Menschen: Werke, Vol. VI. p. 313, et seq. Begriff einer Menschenrace; ib. p. 33, et seq. Muthmaaslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte; ib. Vol. VII. p. 363, et seq. Even Schleiermacher departs from the common view. Christliche Glaube, § 60–61. See, likewise, the ingenious observations of Samuel S. Smith, Inquiry into the causes of different complexions, etc. of the human race. To make out the case, that all men are descended from a primitive pair, it is only necessary to assume, *philosophically*, a principle in the first man, whence all varieties may be derived, and then, *historically*, to assume the derivation, and the vicious circle is complete. Kames has some disingenuous remarks, in his History of Man. Preliminary Discourse. See Mémoires de l'Académie royale des Sciences morales et politiques; (Paris), 1841, Tom. III. p. XXIII. et seq. and the literature referred to.

by the traditional torch of truth, still kept by their more fortunate brothers.*

Now in favor of this latter opinion there is no direct historical testimony except the legendary and mythological writings of the Hebrews, which have no more authority in the premises than the similar narratives of the Phœnicians, the Persians, and Chinese. If we assume the miraculous authority of these legends, the matter ends — in an assumption. The indirect testimony in favor of this doctrine is this: The opinion, found in many nations, that there had once been a golden age. Now, if this opinion were universal, it would not prove the fact alleged, for it can easily be explained from the notorious tendency of men, in a low state of civilization to aggrandize the past; the senses delight to remember. That opinion only serves to illustrate this tendency. The sensual Greek often looked

* See this, which is the prevalent opinion, set forth by Knapp, ubi sup. Vol. I. § 54–57. Hahn, Lehrbuch des Christ. Glaub. § 74–75. Tholuck, in Biblical Repository, Vol. II. p. 119, et seq. Hopkins's System of Doctrines, etc. 2d edit. Vol. I. Part I. chap. V. VIII. —— Bretschneider, Dogmatik, 4th edit. Vol. I. § 112, et seq., gives the Lutheran view of this subject, *but thinks Oken no heretic for maintaining* (in the Isis for 1819, Vol. II. p. 1118), *that man may have arisen from an embryo, with human qualities, in the slime of the sea!* p. 812. See Jeremy Taylor, Doctrine and Practice of Repentance, chap. VI., and the conflicting remarks in the sermon at the funeral of Sir George Dalston. Jonathan Edwards, Original Sin, Part. II. chap. I. and Notes on Bible; Works, Lond. 1839, Vol. II. p. 689, et seq. More on the same subject may be seen in Faber's Horæ Mosaicæ. Edwards, On the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures. Collier's Lectures on Scripture Facts. Gray's connection between Sacred and Profane Literature. Cormack's Inquiry. Fletcher's Appeal. Deane's Worship of the Serpent, etc. etc. Sénac, Christianisme dans ses Rapports avec la Civilization modérne; Paris, 1837, Vol. I. pt. I. ch. II. See the opinions of the ancients on the creation and primitive state of man, collected in Grotius, De Veritate. ed. Clericus, Lib. I. § 16.

longingly backward to the golden age; but the more spiritual prophet of the Hebrews look forward to the kingdom of Heaven yet to be. But the opinion prevails among many nations, that they have slowly advanced from a ruder state.*

Again, it is often alleged, that no nation has ever risen out of the savage state except under the influence of tribes previously enlightened — an historical thesis which has never been proved. No one knows whence the Chinese, the Mexicans, the Peruvians, derived assistance. We have yet to be told who taught the Greenlander to build his boat; the Otaheitan to fashion his war club; the Sacs and Pawnees to handle the hatchet, cook the flesh of the buffalo, and wear his skin. Besides it is begging the question, to say the civilization of Rome, Athens, Tyre, Judea, Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, came from the traditionary knowledge of some primitive people. If a savage nation in seven centuries can learn to use oil and tallow for light, in a time sufficiently long it may write the Iliad, and build the Parthenon.

Again, it is said that traces of monotheism are found even in the low stages of our religious history. This must neccesarily follow from the identity of the human race; from the sentiment and idea of God, expressing themselves spontaneously. If man is the same in all ages, differing only in degree of development, and this element is natural to him, then we must expect to find such expressions of it in the poets and philosophers; in the religion of India, Greece, and Rome. Men of the

* Strauss, Die Christ. Glaubenslehre; 1840–1, Vol. I. § 45, et seq. decides against the hypothesis of a single pair, and even ascribes the origin of man to the power of *equivocal generation*. But his arguments in favor of the latter have little or no weight. See Kames, ubi sup.

same spiritual elevation see everywhere the same spiritual truth. If this doctrine of monotheism proceed from tradition alone, then it must be more clear and distinct as we approach the source of the tradition. But this is notoriously contrary to facts.*

The opposite doctrine has no more of *direct* historical testimony in its favor; but is supported by many indirect testimonies: by the fact, that the greater part of the human race are still in the condition of fetichism and polytheism and that the further we go back in history the worse is this state, and the ruder their religion. In the days of Herodotus, the proportion of rude and savage people was far greater than at this day. Even in that nation alleged to be most highly favored, we find their social, moral, and religious condition is more rude the further we trace it back. They and other nations, at the time we first meet them in history, bordered close upon the fetichistic state to which their mythology refers. No nation has ever been found in a normal state of religious culture.

If we reason only from established facts, we must conclude, that the hypothesis of a golden age, a garden of Eden, a perfect condition of man on the earth in ancient times, is purely gratuitous. The kingdom of heaven is not behind but before us. No one can determine, by historical evidence, what was the primitive state of the human race, or when or where, or how mankind, at the command of God, came into existence. Here our conclusions can be only negative.†

* Voltaire, Essai sur les Mœurs, etc.; edit. 1785, Vol. I. p. 17, et seq. 29, et seq. has many just remarks on the ruder periods of society.

† Constant, Liv. I. ch. VI. and X. ch. VI. treats this subject with a superficiality unsual even with him. He thinks, the doctrine of a fall is a device of the priesthood, at least, that it

II. *On the Immortality of the Soul.*

The doctrine that man lives forever seems almost as general as the belief in a God. Like that, it comes naturally from an eternal desire in the human heart; a longing after the infinite. In the rudest nations and the most civilized, this doctrine appears. Perhaps there has never been but a single form of religion among the civilized men under which it was not taught plainly and distinctly, and here it was continually implied. It seems we have by nature a sentiment of immortality; an instinctive belief therein. Rude nations, in whom instinct seems to predominate, trust the spontaneous belief. They construct an ideal world, in which the shade of the departed pursues his calling and finds justice at the last; recompense for his toil; right for his earthly wrongs. The conception of the form of future life depends on the condition and character of the believer. Hence it is a state of war or peace; of sensual or spiritual delight; of reform or progress, with different nations. The notion formed of the next world is the index of man's state in this. Here the idolater and the pantheist, the Mahometan and the Christian, express their conflicting views of life. The sentiment and idea of immortality may be true, but the definite conception must be mainly subjective and therefore false. In a low stage of civilization the doctrine, like the religious feelings themselves, seems to

owes its importance and continuation to the sacerdotal class. See some admirable remarks on the savage state in de Maistre, Soirées de St. Petersburg, Vol. I. See also Leroux's criticism on the opinions of Jouffroy and Pascal in his Réfutation de l'Eclecticism; 1840, p. 330, et seq. Leroux believes in the progress of all species, man, the beaver, and the bee. M. Maret, ubi sup. p. 30, et seq. and 240, et seq. makes some very judicious observations.

have little moral influence on life. It presents no motive to virtue, and therefore does not receive the same place in their system, as at a subsequent period.

In rude ages, men reason but little. As they begin to be civilized they ask proofs of immortality, not satisfied with the instinctive feeling; not convinced that infinite Goodness will do what is best for all and each of his creatures. Hence come doubts on this head; inquiries; attempts to prove the doctrine; a denial of it. There seems an antithesis between instinct and understanding. The *reasoning* of men is then against it, but when an accident drives them to somewhat more fundamental than processes of logic, the instinctive belief does its work. Here then are three distinct things: a belief in a future and immortal state; a definite conception of that state; and a proof of the fact of a future and immortal state. The two latter may be fluctuating and inadequate, while the former remains secure.

Now it may be considered as pretty well fixed, that all nations of the earth, above the mere wild man, believe this doctrine; at least, the exceptions are so rare, that they only confirm the rule. However, it is often difficult, and sometimes impossible to determine the popular conception, and the influence of this belief at a particular time and place. But the subject demands a more special and detailed examination. Let us look at the opinion of the ancients.

I. *Opinion of the Hebrews respecting a Future State.*

It has sometimes been taught that this doctrine was perfectly understood, even by the Patriarchs; and sometimes declared altogether foreign to the Old Testament. Both statements are incorrect. In some

parts of the Hebrew scriptures we find rude notions of a future state, but a firm belief in it; in others doubt, and even denial thereof. In the early books, at least, it never appears as a motive. It has no sanction in the law; no symbol in the Jewish worship. The soul was sometimes placed in the *blood*, as by Empedocles;* sometimes in the *breath;*† the heart, or the bowels were sometimes considered as its seat.‡ The notion of immortality was indefinite in the early books; there are cloudy views of a subterranean world,§ which gradually acquire more distinctness. The state of the departed is a gloomy, joyless consciousness; the servant is free from his master; the king has a shadowy grandeur.|| The dead prophet can be called back to admonish the living. Enoch and Elijah, like Ganymede with the Greeks, being favorites of the deity,¶

* Gen. IX. 4; Lev. XVII. 11; Deut. XII. 23. See Cicero, Tusc. Lib. I. Ch. 9, 10.

† Gen. II. 7; Ps. CIV. 29, et al.

‡ Deut. XXXII. 46; Ps. VII. 10; Ps. XVI. 7; Prov. XXIII. 16, et al.

§ Gen. XXV. 8, XXXVII. 35; Num. XVI. 30, 33. In Job, Isaiah, and the Psalms this becomes more definite. Job X. 21, XXXVIII. 17.

|| Job III. 13–19; Isaiah XIV.; Ezek. XXXII.; 1 Sam. XXVIII. See Homer, Od. XI. Virgil, Æneid, VI.

¶ See also Ps. XVII. 15; LXXIII. 24. See the mistakes of Michaelis respecting this doctrine of immortality, in his Argumenta immortalitate, . . . ex Mose collecta, in his Syntagma Comment. Vol. I. p. 80, et seq. See his notes on Lowth, p. 465, ed. Rosenmüller. Warburton founds his strange hypothesis on the opposite view. See on this point, Bauer, Dicta classica, Vol. II. § 56, et seq., de Wette, ubi sup. § 113, et seq. Lessing, Beyträgen aus der Wolfenbüttelschen Bibliothek, Vol. IV. p. 484, et seq. See the moderate and judicious remarks of Knapp, ubi sup. Vol. II. § 149. See Henkes Mag. für Religions Philosophie, Vol. V. pt. I. p. 16, et seq. and a treatise in the Studien und Kritiken for 1830, Vol. II. p. 884, et seq.

are taken miraculously to him. Other passages deny the doctrine of immortality with great plainness.*

After the return from exile, the doctrine appears more definitely. Ezekiel, and the pseudo-Isaiah † allude to a resurrection of the body, a notion which is perhaps of Zoroastrian origin.‡ Perhaps older than Zoroaster. But it is only doubtful immortality that is taught in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, though in the Wisdom of Solomon,§ and in the *fourth* book of Maccabees, it is set forth with great clearness.|| The second book of Maccabees teaches in the plainest terms the resurrection of all; the righteous to happiness, the wicked to shame.¶ They will find their former

* Eccles. III. 19–21; IX. 10. In Job XIV. 10–14, et al, Job dictinctly denies the immortality which he had previously affirmed, but this shows the exquisite art of the poem. See de Wette, Introduction to O. T., Vol. II. p. 556–557, note *a*. Perhaps the opinions put into Job's mouth are not those of the author but such only as he thought the circumstances of his hero required.

† Ezek. XXXVII.; Isa. XXVI. 19. See Gesenius in loco.

‡ Rhode, ubi sup. p. 494, Nork, Mythen der alten Perser; 1835, p. 148, et seq. Priestley, ubi sup. § XXIII. Bretschneider, ubi sup. § 58, p. 325, et seq.

§ I. 15, 16; II. 25 — III. et seq.; V. 15; VI. 18. It is connected with a preëxistent state, VIII. 19–20. The 2d Book of Esdras is quite remarkable for the view it presents of this doctrine. See II. 23, 31, 34, 35; IV. 40, et seq.; VII. 13, 27–35, 42, et seq.; VIII. 1, et seq. et al. But the character and date of the book prevent me from using it in the text.

|| XV. 3; XVI. 25; XVII. 18, et al. de Wette, ubi sup. § 180. See the remarkable passage in 4th Esdras, which Fabricius has added from the Arabic Version Codex pseudepigraphus; ed alt. Hamb. 1741, Vol. II. p. 235, et seq. However, it may have been added by a Christian. In the Psalter of Solomon, it is said *they that fear the Lord shall rise again to everlasting life.* See Ch. XIV. 2, et seq., and XV. in Fabricius ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 926, 954, et seq. I do not pretend to determine the date of this apocryphal book.

¶ VII. 9, 11, 14, 23; XII. 43, et seq.; XV. 12 et seq.

friends, and resume their old pursuits.* Nothing is plainer.

At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the body; a state of rewards and punishments.† Some of them connected it with the common notion of the transmigration of souls;‡ perhaps with that of preëxistence. The Essenes, still more philosophically, taught the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of retribution, without the resurrection of the body. The soul is formed of the most subtle air, and is confined in the body as in a prison; death redeems it from a long bondage, and the living soul mounts upward rejoicing.§ We find similar views in Philo.|| Perhaps they were common in reflecting minds at the time of Jesus, who always presupposes a belief

* See in Eichhorn, ubi sup. Vol. IV. p. 653, et seq., a valuable contribution to the History of this doctrine by Frisch. He makes an ingenious comparison of passages from the Apocrypha, and the New Testament. The same doctrine is taught in both. See Flatt, in Paulus, Memorabil. st. II. p. 157 et seq. Bretschneider, ubi sup. § 53–58.

† Acts XXIII. 6–8; XXIV. 15; Matth. XXII. 24, et seq.; Mark XII. 19, et seq.

‡ Josephus, Wars, II. 8. 14. Josephus may have added the Metempsychosis to suit the taste of his readers.

§ Josephus, Wars, II. 8, 11. Josephus himself seems to agree with this opinion, when he "talks like a philosopher," in his pretended speech, Wars, III. 8, 5. See Buddeus, ubi sup. II. p. 1202, et seq., Paulus Memorabil., Vol. II. p. 157, et seq. and de Wette, ubi sup. § 178, et seq.

|| See also the views of Philo, De Somniis; p. 586. De Abrah, p. 385. De Mundi Opif. p. 31. The soul is immortal by *nature*, not by *grace*. See Dähne, Geschichtliche Darstellung der Judischen,— Alexand. Philosophie, etc. 1834, Vol. I. p. 330, et seq., 405, 485, et seq., who cites the above and other proof passages. Ritter, ubi sup. Vol. IV. See Weizel on the primitive doctrine of immortality among the Christians, in Theol. Stud, und Kritiken, for 1836, p. 957, et seq. Constant, Liv. IX. Ch. VII. makes

in immortality. The Sadducees alone opposed it. Such were the beginning and history of this dogma with the Jews. Its progress and formation are obvious.

II. *Of this Doctrine among the Heathen Nations.*

Among savage nations this belief is common. It appears in prayers and offerings for the dead; in the mode of burial. The savage American deposits in the tomb the bow and the pipe, the dress and the tomahawk of the deceased warrior. The Scythian, the Goth, the Indian, and the half-barbarous Greek, burned or buried the horse, or the servant, the wife, or the captive of a great man at his decease, that he might go down royally attended to the realm of shades. Metempsychosis; the deification of the dead, ceremonies in their honor, gifts left on their tombs, oaths confirmed in their name, are all signs of this belief.* The Egyptians, the Gauls, and Scandinavians spoke

some just remarks on this subject. On the state of opinions in the time of Christ, see Gfrörer, Jahrhundert des Heils; 1838. Vol. II. Ch. VII. Triglandius de tribus Judæorum sectis, in quo Serarii, Drusii, Scaligeri, Opuscula, etc.; 1703, Vol. I. Part I. Lib. II. and III. Part II. Lib. II.–IV. and Scaliger's Animadversions; and the very valuable treatise of Leclerc, Prolegomena ad Hist. Eccl. Lib. I. Ch. I. See Flügge, Geschichte des Glaubens an Unsterblichkeit, etc. etc.; Leip. 1794, Vol. I. p. 112–160, 201–251, et passim. Bouchitté Mém. de l'Institut. Savans étrangères tom. II. p. 621, et seq.

* See Lafitau, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 387, et seq., 410, et seq., 420, et seq., 444, et seq., Vol. I. p. 359, et seq., 507, et seq. Catlin, ubi sup. Vol. I. Bancroft's Hist. Vol. III. Ch. XXII. Constant, Livre IX. Ch. VII. VIII. Livre II. Ch. IV. Martin, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 18, 56, 329; Vol. II. p. 212, et seq. United States Exploring Expedition; Phil. 1845–6. Vol. VII. p. 63, et seq., 99, et seq. et al. For the fetichism of the savages, see p. 16, et seq., 26, et seq., 51, et seq., 97, et seq., 110, et seq.

of death as the object of life.* Lucan foolishly thinks the latter are brave because they believe in endless existence.

Each savage people has its place of souls. Death with them is not an extinction, but a change of life. The tomb is a sacred place. No expense is too great for the dead. The picture of heaven is earth embellished. At first, the next world is not a domain of moral justice; God has no tribunal of judgment. But with the advance of the present, the conception of a future state rises also. The Pawnees have but one place for the departed. The Scandinavians have two, Nifleheim and Nastrond; the Persians seven; the Hindoos no less than twenty-four, for different degrees of merit.† With many savages, the good and evil become angels to bless, or demons to curse mankind.‡

To come to the civilized states of antiquity, India, Egypt, Persia, we find the doctrine prevalent in the earliest time, even in the ages when mythology takes the place of history. In India and Egypt it was most often connected with transmigration to other bodies. Herodotus says, the Egyptians first taught the doc-

* On the belief of the Scandinavians, the Caledonians, the Parsees, Indians, etc., see Flügge, Vol. II. The ancient Lithuanians had some singular opinions and customs in relation to the dead, for which see Boemus, Omnium Gentium Mores, etc.; Friburg, 1540, p. 182.

† Constant, ibid. Meiners, ubi sup., Vol. I. Book III. See Leroux, De l'Humanité, etc. Vol. II. p. 468, et seq.

‡ Meiners, p. 302, et seq. Farmer, On the Worship of Human Spirits, passim. I have mentioned a few books on this subject, which have furnished the facts on which the above conclusions rest. I can refer to books of travels, voyages in general, the Lettres Edifiantes, descriptions of foreign countries, which furnish the facts in abundance. The works of Meiners, Constant, and Lafitau are themselves but a compilation from these sources.

trine.* But who knows? Pausanias is nearer the truth when he refers it to India,† where it was taught before the birth of philosophy in the west.‡ It begins with the beginning of the nations.

In Greece we find it in a rude form in Homer; connected with Metempsychosis in Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Pherecydes; assuming a new form in Sophocles and Pindar, and becoming a doctrine fixed and settled with Socrates, Plato, and his school in general.§ In Homer the future state is a joyless existence. Achilles would rather be king of earthly men for a day, than of spirits forever. Like the future state of the Jews, it offers no motive, and presents no terror. The shades of the weary came together from all lands into their dim sojourn. Enemies forgot their strife; but friends were joined.|| The present life is obscurely renewed in the next world. But the more especial friends or foes of the gods are raised to honor, or condemned to shame. The transmigration of souls is perhaps de-

* Lib. II. Chap. 123. See Creutzer's note, in Bähr's edition.

† The date of all things is uncertain in the East. I cannot pretend to chronological accuracy, but see Asiatic Researches, Vol. V. p. 360; VII. 310; VIII. 448, et seq. Priestley, ubi sup. § XXIII.; Ritter. Vol. I. p. 132.

‡ Stanley's History of Philosophy, Part XIII. Sect. II. Chap. X. Hyde, ubi sup.

§ Brouwer, Vol. II. Ch. XVIII.; Wilkinson, Vol. II. p. 440, et seq. Homer assigns to the gods a beautiful abode not shaken by the winds, etc. Od. VI. 41, et seq. See the imitation of the passage in Lucretius, III. 18, et seq. Struchtmeyer, Theologia Mythica, sive de Origine Tartari et Elysyii, Libri V.; Hag. Com. 1753. 1 Vol. 8vo. Lib. I.

|| See Iliad, XXIII. et seq. et al. Odyss. XI. and XXIV. passim, and Heyne, Excursus on Iliad, XXIII. 71 and 104, Vol. VIII. p. 368, et seq. Diod. etc. Vol. I. p. 86. See the similar views of the North American Indians, in Schoolcraft, Algic Researches. Wachsmuth, Vol. II. Part II. p. 106, 244, 290. Potter, Antiquities. Görres, Mythengeschichte, passim.

rived from the wondrous mutation in the vegetable and animal world, where an acorn unswathed becomes an oak, and an egg discloses an eagle.*

In Hesiod, the condition of the dead is improved with the advance of the nation. The good have a place in the Isles of the Blest.† In the later poets, the doctrine rises still higher, while the form is not always definite.‡ Pindar celebrates the condition of the good in the next life. It is a state where the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished until sin is consumed from their nature, when they come to the divine abode.§

To pass from the poets to the philosophers; the immortality of the soul was taught continually, from Pherecydes to Plotinus. There were those who doubted, and some that denied; yet it was defended by

* See Xenophon, Memorab. ed. Schneider; Lips. 1829, Lib. I. Chap. III. § 7, and the Note of Börnemann.

† Opera et dies, vs. 160, et seq., and the Scholia in Poet. Min. ed. Gaisford: Lips. 1823, Vol. II. p. 142, et seq.

‡ See the Gnomic poets in general, for the moral views of life; for the immortality of the soul, Simonides, Frag. XXX. (XXXIII.) Tyrtæus III. in Gaisford, Vol. III. p. 160, 242. See the curious passage in Aristophanes, Ranae, vs. 449–460. Opp. ed. Bekker; Lond. 1829, Vol. I. p. 535; in which see B's note. See Orpheus, as cited by Lobeck, Aglaoph, p. 950. Cudworth, Chap. I. § 21, 22; and Moshiem in loc. See the indifferent book of Priestley, Heathen Philosophy, Part I. § III. V.; Part II. § III. V.; also p. 125, et seq., 197, et seq., 265, et seq.

§ Olymp. II. vs. 104, et seq. (57–92, in Dissen.) See Cowley's wild imitation in his Pindarique Odes; Lond. 1720, Vol. II. p. 160, et seq. See similar thoughts in Propertius, Lib. III. 39, et seq.; and Tibullus, Eleg. III. 58, Virgil. Æneid, VI. See also Pindar's Fragment, II. Vol. III. p. 34, ed. Heyne; Lips. 1817. Frag. I. p. 31, et seq. Frag. III. p. 36; and the notes of Dissen, in his edition of Pindar, Vol. II. p. 648, et seq.; and Lobeck, ubi sup. See, who will, a treatise in the Acta Eruditorum for August, 1722, de Statu Animæ separatæ post mortem, etc.

all the greatest philosophers, Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Plutarch, Epictetus,* and by the most influential schools. No doubt it was often connected with absurd notions, in jest or earnest. But when or where has its fate been different? Bishop Warburton thinks it no part of natural religion; Dodwell thinks immortality is only coëxtensive with Christian baptism, and is superinduced upon

* Cicero, Tusc. Lib. I. Chap. XVI., says Pherecydes was the first who taught this doctrine. See the note in Lemaire's edition. See also Diogenes Laert. Thales, Lib. I. § 43, p. 27, et seq., and Plutarch, De Placitis Phil. Lib. IV. Ch. II.–VII. Opp. Vol. II. p. 898, et seq. It has been thought doubtful that Aristotle believed in immortality, and perhaps it is not easy to *prove* this point. See De Anima, III. 5; but compare Ethic. Nicom. Lib. III. Chap. VI. which denies it. See again De Anima, II. 2. De Gen. Anim. III. 4. Plato teaches immortality with the greatest clearness. See the Phædo, passim. Gorgias, p. 524, et seq., et al. Apolog. Laws (if they are genuine), Lib. X. XII. Epinomis, Timæus, Rep. X. p. 612, et seq. Plato makes the *essence* of man spiritual: Tim. p. 69, C. et seq. 72, D. et seq. Rep. IV. p. 431 A. He was opposed to the Materialists, Soph. p. 246. A. However, he did not condemn the body. His *argument* in favor of immortality, like many later arguments on the same theme, creates more questions than it answers. The *form* of the doctrine, its connection with *preëxistence* and *transmigration,* like many doctrines still popularly connected with it, serve only to disfigure the doctrine itself, and bring it into reproach. The opinion of Cicero is so well known, that it is almost superfluous to cite passages; but see Frag. de Consolat. 12, et seq. 27, et al. De Senectute, Chap. XXI., et seq. Tusc. I. C. 16. De Amicit. Ch. 3, 4. Somnium Scipionis, et al. See Seneca, De Ira, I. 3. Consolatio ad Helv. Chap. VI. De Vita beata, Chap. XXXII. Ep. 50, 102, 117. Sometimes he speaks decidedly, at other times with doubt. See Lipsius Physiol. Stoic. Lib. III. Diss. VIII.–XIX. See Locke, Essay, Book IV. Chap. III. and Letters to Bishop of Worcester.

See Plutarch, De Sera Numinis Vindicta, Morals; Lond. 1691, Vol. IV. p. 197, et seq. See too the Story of Soleus the Thespesian, ibid. p. 206, et seq. Plut. Vit. Quint. Sertorius. Opp. I. 571–2, F. & B. for an account of the Fortunate Islands,

the mortal soul by that dispensation of water.* Could a heathen be more absurd? If the popular doctrine of the Christian church, which dooms the mass of men to endless misery, be true, then were immortality a misfortune to the race. The wisest of the heathen taught such a dogma as little as did Jesus of Nazareth. We must always separate the doctrine from its proof and its form; the latter is often imperfect while the doctrine in true.

Since the time of Bishop Warburton, it has been common to deny that the heathen were acquainted with this doctrine.† "It was one guess among many,"

with which Comp. Diod. Sic. Hist. II. Vol. I. p. 137, et seq. It seems the Priests of Serapis distinctly taught the immortality of the soul. Augustine says, "Many of the philosophers of the Gentiles have written much concerning the immortality of the soul, and in numerous books have they left it on record that the soul is immortal. *But when you come to the resurrection of the flesh, they do not hesitate but openly deny that, contradicting it to such a degree that they declare it impossible for this terrene flesh to rise to heaven.*" Expos. Psalms, LXXXVIII. Justin M. says the doctrine of immortality was *no new thing* in Christ's time — but was taught by Plato and Pythagoras. The new element Christ added to the doctrine he thinks was the *resurrection of the flesh.* Opp. ed. Otto. II. p. 540. See the literature collected on this subject by Kortholt in his Annotations on Athenagoras, Legat. etc. etc.; ed. Oxon. 1704, p. 94, et seq.

* Epistolary Discourse, etc. London, 1706. He thinks that *regular bishops* have the power of making men immortal through the "*divine baptismal spirit.*" See for the history of opinions among the Christians, Flügge, Vol. III. pt. 1 and 2.

† Warburton has the merit of framing an hypothesis so completely original that no one, perhaps (except Bishop Hurd), has ever shared it in full with him. Part of his singular theory is this: A belief in a future state was found necessary *in heathen countries,* to keep the subjects in order; the philosophers and priests got up a doctrine for that purpose, teaching that the soul was immortal, but not believing a word of it. *Moses, who believed the doctrine, yet never taught it, controlled the people by means of his inspiration, and the perfect law.*

has often been said. But a man even slightly acquainted with ancient thought and life, knows it is not so. God has not made truth so hard to come at, that the world of men continued so many thousand years in ignorance of a future life. Before the time above named, it was taught by scholars, even scholars of the clerical order, that the doctrine was well known to the heathen. Cudworth and More, Wilkins, Taylor, and Wollaston, to mention only the most obvious names, bear testimony to the fact.*

To sum up in a few words the history of this doctrine, both among Jews and Gentiles: it seems that rude nations, like the Celts and the Sarmatians, clung instinctively to the sentiment of immortality; that the doctrine was well known to the philosophers, and commonly accepted; that some doubted, and some denied it altogether. A few had reached an eminence in philosophy, and could in their way demonstrate the proposition, and satisfy their logical doubt, thus reconciling the instinctive and reflective faculty. From the first book of Moses to the last of Maccabees; from Homer to Cicero, there is a great change in the form of the doctrine. All other forms also had changed.

* See Cudworth and More, passim. Wilkins, Principles and Duties of Natural Religion, etc. Book I. Ch. XI.; see also Ch. IV. and VIII. Taylor's sermon, preached at the funeral of that worthy Knight, Sir George Dalston, etc. Wollaston, Religion of Nature, Sect. IX. It would be easy to cite passages from the early Christians, testifying to the truth possessed by the heathens B. C. I will mention but one from Minucius Felix. "A man might judge either that the present Christians are philosophers, or else that the old philosophers were Christians." See likewise Brougham's Discourse on Natural Theology. Note VI.–IX. in Appendix. Polybius, ubi sup. Lib. VI. c. 53–56, seems to think the legislators got up the doctrine, with no faith in it, except a general belief it would make men submissive. See Timæus, De Anima Mundi, in Gale, ubi sup.

But how far was the doctrine diffused among the people? We can tell but faintly from history. But what nature demands and providence affords, lingers longest in the bosom of the mass of men. The doctrine was not strange to the fishermen of Galilee. Was it more so to the peasants of Greece? * The early apologists of Christianity found no difficulty from the unity of God, and the immortality of the soul; both are presupposed by Jesus and Paul. How far it moved men in common life can be told neither from the courtiers of pagan Cæsar Augustus, nor from those of Christian Louis the Well-beloved. A Roman, and a Christian pontiff — how much are they moved by the tardy terrors of future judgment? † Juvenal could repeat his biting sneer in more ages than one.‡ Was the argument of the pagan philosopher unsatisfactory? It was never otherwise. Mr. Strauss declares it has not yet been demonstrated; Mr. Locke that it cannot be proved. The spontaneous sentiment does its work with few words. Who shall demonstrate for us a fact of consciousness, or prove our personal identity? But the doctrine was connected with gross errors,— preëxistence and metempsychosis. Has the doctrine ever been free of such connection? in even a single historical case? It does not appear. The doctrine of inherited sin, of depravity born in the

* The *resurrection of the body,* seems to have been the doctrine that offended Paul's hearers at Athens; that of *immortality* alone was well known to the Stoics, some of whom believed it, and the Epicureans, who rejected it. Acts XVII. 16, et seq. See Wetstein in loc.

† See Horace, Epist. Lib. I. Ep. XVI. Juvenal, Satir XIII. Persius, Satir. II. How far do these express the popular sentiment?

‡ Satir. II. 149, et seq.

bones of men; the notion that the mass of men are doomed by the God of Mercy to eternal woe — immortal only to be wretched — is not a strange thing, in the nineteenth century. Modern savages have foul notions of God; ancient civilization has sins enough on its head, hideous sins unknown even in our day, for the world has been worse,— but both are free from such a stain.*

* Leclerc, ubi sup. gives a bird's-eye view of the state of the world at the commencement of the Christian period, perhaps the most faithful that has been given, of manners and opinions. The popular mythology was in about the same estimation among cultivated men, as the popular theology at the present time with men of piety and good sense. Leroux de l'Humanite, Vol. I. p. 302, et seq., makes some observations, on this doctrine among the ancients, not without interest. See a Sermon of Immortal Life, by Theo. Parker, Bost. 1846.

CHAPTER VII

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT ON LIFE

Man is not a being of isolated faculties which act independently. The religious, like each other element in us, acts jointly with other powers. Its action therefore is helped or hindered by them. The idea of religion is only realized by an harmonious action of all the faculties, the intellectual, the moral. Yet the religious faculty must act, more or less, though the understanding be not cultivated, and the moral elements sleep in Egyptian night; in connection therefore with wisdom, or folly, with hope or fear, with love or hate. Now in all periods of human history religion demands something of her votaries. The ruder their condition, the more capricious and unreasonable is the demand. Though the religious instinct itself be ever the same, the form of its expression varies with man's intellectual and moral state. Its influence on life may be considered under its three different manifestations.

I. *Of Superstition.*

Combining with ignorance and fear, the religious element leads to superstition. This is the vilification and debasement of men. It may be defined as Fear before God. Plutarch, though himself religious, pronounced it worse than atheism. But the latter cannot exist to the same extent; is never an active principle. Superstition is a morbid state of human nature, where the conditions of religious development are not

fulfilled; where the functions of the religious faculty are impeded and counteracted. But it must act, as the heart beats in the frenzy of a fever. It has been said with truth, "Perfect love casts out fear." The converse is quite as true. Perfect fear casts out love. The superstitious man begins by fearing God, not loving him. He goes on, like a timid boy in the darkness, by projecting his own conceptions out of himself; conjuring up a phantom he calls his God; a deity capricious, cruel, revengeful, lying in wait for the unwary; a God ugly, morose, and only to be feared. He ends by paying a service meet for such a God, the service of horror and fear. Each man's conception of God is his conception of a man carried out to infinity; the pure idea is eclipsed by a human personality. This conception therefore varies as the men who form it vary. It is the index of their soul. The superstitious man projects out of himself a creation begotten of his folly and his fear; calls the furious phantom God, Moloch, Jehovah; then attempts to please the capricious being he has conjured up. To do this, the demands his superstition makes are not to keep the laws which the one God wrote on the walls of man's being; but to do arbitrary acts which this fancied God demands. He must give up to the deity what is dearest to himself. Hence the savage offers a sacrifice of favorite articles of food; the first-fruits of the chase, or agriculture; weapons of war which have done signal service; the nobler animals; the skins of rare beasts. He conceives the anger of his god may be soothed like a man's excited passion by libations, incense, the smoke of plants, the steam of a sacrifice.

Again, the superstitious man would appease his God, by unnatural personal service. He undertakes

an enterprise, almost impossible, and succeeds, for the fire of his purpose subdues and softens the rock that opposes him. He submits to painful privation of food, rest, clothing; leads a life of solitude; wears a comfortless dress, that girds and frets the very flesh; stands in a painful position; shuts himself in a dungeon; lives in a cave; stands on a pillar's top; goes unshorn and filthy. He exposes himself to be scorched by the sun, and frozen by the frost. He lacerates his flesh; punctures his skin to receive sacred figures of the gods. He mutilates his body, cutting off the most useful members. He sacrifices his cattle, his enemies, his children; defiles the sacred temple of his body; destroys his moral life to serve his God. In a state more refined, superstition demands abstinence from all the sensual goods of life. Its present pleasures are a godless thing. The flesh is damned. To serve God is to mortify the appetites God gave. Then the superstitious man abstains from comfortable food, clothing, and shelter; comes neither eating nor drinking; watches all night absorbed in holy vigils. The man of God must be thin and spare. Bernard has but to show his neck, fleshless and scraggy, to be confessed a mighty saint. Above all, he must abstain from marriage. The devil lurks under the bridal rose. The vow of the celibate can send him howling back to hell. The smothered volcano is grateful to God. Then comes the assumption of arbitrary vows; the performance of pilgrimages to distant places, thinly clad and barefoot; the repetition of prayers, not as a delight, spontaneously poured out, but as a penance, or work of supererogation. In this state, superstition builds convents, monasteries, sends Anthony to his dwelling in the desert; it founds orders of Mendicants,

Rechabites, Nazarites, Encratites, Pilgrims, Flagellants and similar moss-troopers of religion whom heaven yet turns to good account. This is the superstition of the flesh. It promises the favor of its god on condition of these most useless and arbitrary acts. It dwells on the absurdest of externals.

However, in a later day, it goes to still more subtle refinements. The man does not mutilate his body, nor give up the most sacred of his material possessions. That was the superstition of savage life. But he mutilates his soul; gives up the most sacred of his spiritual treasures. This is the superstition of refined life. Here the man is ready to forego reason, conscience, and love, God's most precious gifts; the noblest attributes of man; the tie that softly joins him to the eternal world. He will think against reason; decide against conscience; act against love, because he dreams the god of reason, conscience, and love demands it. It is a slight thing to hack and mutilate the body, though it be the fairest temple God ever made, and to mar its completeness a sin. But to dismember the soul, the very image of God; to lop off most sacred affections; to call reason a liar, conscience a devil's-oracle, and cast love clean out from the heart, this is the last triumph of superstition; but one often witnessed, in all three forms of religion — fetichism, polytheism, monotheism; in all ages before Christ; in all ages after Christ. This is the superstition of the soul. The one might be the superstition of the hero; this is the superstition of the Pharisee.

A man rude in spirit must have a rude conception of God. He thinks the deity like himself. If a buffalo had a religion, his conception of deity would probably be a buffalo, fairer limbed, stronger, and swifter than

himself, grazing in the fairest meadows of heaven. If he were superstitious, his service would consist in offerings of grass, of water, of salt; perhaps in abstinence from the pleasures, comforts, necessities of a bison's life. His devil also would be a buffalo, but of another color, lean, vicious, and ugly. Now when a man has these rude conceptions, inseparable from a rude state, offerings and sacrifices are natural. When they come spontaneous, as the expression of a grateful or a penitent heart; the seal of a resolution; the sign of faith, hope, and love, as an outward symbol which strengthens the in-dwelling sentiment — the sacrifice is pleasant and may be beautiful. The child who saw God in the swelling and rounded clouds of a June day, and left on a rock the ribbon-grass and garden roses as mute symbols of gratitude to the great spirit who poured out the voluptuous weather; the ancient pagan who bowed prone to the dust, in homage, as the sun looked out from the windows of morning, or offered the smoke of incense at nightfall in gratitude for the day, or kissed his hand to the moon, thankful for that spectacle of loveliness passing above him; the man who with reverent thankfulness or penitence, offers a sacrifice of joy or grief, to express what words too poorly tell:— he is no idolater, but nature's simple child. We rejoice in self-denial for a father, a son, a friend. Love and every strong emotion has its sacrifice. It is rooted deep in the heart of men. God needs nothing. He cannot receive; yet man needs to give. But if these things are done, as substitutes for holiness, as causes and not mere signs of reconciliation with God; as means to coax and wheedle the deity and bribe the All-Powerful, it is superstition, rank and odious. Examples enough of this are found in all ages. To

take two of the most celebrated cases, one from the Hebrews, the other from a heathen people: Abraham would sacrifice his son to Jehovah, who demanded that offering,* Agamemnon his daughter to angry Diana. But a deity kindly interfers in both cases. The angel of Jehovah rescues Isaac from the remorseless knife; a ram is found for a sacrifice. Diana delivers the daughter of Agamemnon and leaves a hind in her place. No one doubts the latter is a case of superstí-

* Gen. XXII. 1–14. The conjectures of the learned about this mythical legend, which may have some fact at its foundation, are numerous, and some of them remarkable for their ingenuity. Some one supposes that Abraham was tempted by the *Elohim,* but *Jehovah* prevented the sacrifice. It is easy to find heathen parallels. See the story of Cronus in Eusebius, P. E. I. 10; of Aristodemus, of whom Pausanias tells a curious story, IV. 9. See the case of Helena and Valeria Luperca, who were both miraculously saved from sacrifice, in Plutarch, Paralel. Opp. Vol. II. p. 314. The Bulgarian legend of poor Lasar is quite remarkable and strikingly analogous to that of Abram and Isaac. A stranger comes to Lasar's house, L. has nothing for his guest's supper, and, therefore, at his suggestion, kills Jenko, his son; the guest eats; but at midnight cries aloud that he is — the Lord! Jenko is restored to life. See the story in a notice of Paton's Servia, in For. Quart. Review for Oct. 1845, Am. ed. p. 130.

Polybius says we must allow writers *to enlarge in stories of miracles, and in fables of that sort, when they desire to promote piety among the people.* But, he adds, an excess in this line is not to be tolerated. Opp. Lib. XVI. ch. 11, ed. Schweighäuser; Oxon. 1823, III. p. 289. Elsewhere he says, this would not be necessary in a state composed of wise men, but the *people require to be managed with obscure fears and tragical stories.* Ibid. Lib. VI. ch. 56, Vol. II. p. 389. Strabo is of the same opinion, and thinks that *women and the people cannot be led to piety by philosophical discourses,* only by Fables and Myths. Geog. Lib. I. ch. 2, ed. Siebenkees, p. 51–2. Dionysius Hal. speaks more wisely. Antiq. II. ch. 18–20, Opp. ed. Reiske; Lips. 1774, I. p. 271, et seq., and properly commends Romulus for rejecting immoral stories from the public and official theology.

tion most ghastly and terrible. A father murder his own child — a human sacrifice to the Lord of Life! It is rebellion against conscience, reason, affection; treason against God. Though Calchas, the anointed minister, declared it the will of heaven — there is an older than Calchas who says, It is a lie. He that defends the former patriarch, counting it a blameless and beautiful act of piety and faith performed at the command of God — what shall be said of him? He proves the worm of superstition is not yet dead, nor its fire quenched, and leads weak men to ask, Which then has most of religion, the Christian, who justifies Abraham, or the pagan Greeks, who condemned Agamemnon? He leads weak men to ask; the strong make no question of so plain a matter.

But why go back to patriarchs at Aulis or Moriah; do we not live in New England and the nineteenth century? Have the footsteps of superstition been effaced from our land? Our books of theology are full thereof; our churches and homes not empty of it. When a man fears God more than he loves him; when he will forsake reason, conscience, love — the still small voice of God in the heart — for any of the legion voices of authority, tradition, expediency which come of ignorance, selfishness, and sin; whenever he hopes by a poor prayer, or a listless attendance at church, or an austere observance of sabbaths and fast-days, a compliance with forms; when he hopes by professing with his tongue the doctrine he cannot believe in his heart, to atone for wicked actions, wrong thoughts, unholy feelings, a six-days' life of meanness, deception, rottenness, and sin,— then is he superstitious. Are there no fires but those of Moloch; no idols of printed paper, and spoken wind? No false worship but bow-

ing the knee to Baal, Adonis, Priapus, Cybele? Superstition changes its forms, not its substance. If he were superstitious who in days of ignorance but made his son's body pass through the fire to his God, what shall be said of them in an age of light, who systematically degrade the fairest gifts of men, God's dearest benefaction; who make life darkness, death despair, the world a desert, man a worm, nothing but a worm, and God an ugly fiend, that made the most of men for utter wretchedness, death, and eternal hell? Alas for them. They are blind and see not. They lie down in their folly. Let charity cover them up.

II. *Of Fanaticism.*

There is another morbid state of the religious element. It consists in its union with hatred and other malignant passions in men. Here it leads to fanaticism. As the essence of superstition is fear coupled with religious feeling; so the essence of fanaticism is malice mingling with that sentiment. It may be called Hatred before God. The superstitious man fears lest God hate him; the fanatic thinks he hates not him but his enemies. Is the fanatic a Jew?— the Gentiles are hateful to Jehovah; a Mahometan?— all are infidel dogs who do not bow to the prophet, their end is destruction. Is he a Christian?— he counts all others as heathens whom God will damn; of this or that sect?— he condemns all the rest for their belief, let their life be divine as the prayer of a saint. Out of his selfish passion he creates him a god; breathes into it the breath of his hatred; he worships and prays to it, and says "Deliver me, for thou art my God." Then he feels — so he fancies — inspiration to visit his foes with divine vengeance. He can curse and smite

them in the name of his god. It is the sword of the Lord, and the fire of the Most High that drinks up the blood and stifles the groan of the wretched.

Like superstition, it is found in all ages of the world. It is the insanity of mankind. As the richest soils grow weightiest harvests, or most noxious weeds and poisons the most baneful; as the strongest bodies take disease the most sorely, so the deepest natures, the highest forms of worship, when once infected with this leprosy, go to the wildest excess of desperation. Thus the fanaticism of worshippers of one God has no parallel, among idolaters and polytheists. There is a point in human nature where moral distinctions do not appear, as on the earth there are spots where the compass will not traverse, and dens where the sun never shines. This fact is little dwelt on by philosophers; still it is a fact. Seen from this point, right and wrong lose their distinctive character and run into each other. Good seems evil and evil good, or both appear the same. The sophistry of the understanding sometimes leagues with appetite and gradually entices the thoughtless into this pit. The Antinomian of all times, turns in thither, to increase his faith and diminish his works. It is the very cave of Trophonius; he that enters loses his manhood and walks backward as he returns; his soul, so filled with God, whatever the flesh does, he thinks cannot be wrong, though it breaks all laws, human and divine. The fanatic dwells continually in this state; God demands of him to persecute his foes. The thought troubles him by day, and stares on him as a spectre at night. God or his angel, appear to his crazed fancy and bid him to the work with promise of reward, or spurs him with a curse. Then there is no lie too malignant for him to invent and

utter; no curse too awful for him to imprecate; no refinement of torture too cruel or exquisitely rending for his fancy to devise, his malice to inflict; nature is teased for new tortures; art is racked to extort fresh engines of cruelty. As the jaded Roman offered a reward for the invention of a new pleasure, so the fanatic would renounce heaven could he give an added pang to hell.

Men of this character have played so great a part in the world's history, they must not be passed over in silence. The ashes of the innocents they have burned, are sown broadcast and abundant in all lands. The earth is quick with this living dust. The blood of prophets, and saviors they have shed still cries for justice. The Canaanites, the Jews, the Saracen, the Christian, polytheist and idolater, New Zealand and New England are guilty of this. Let the early Christian and the delaying heathen tell their tale. Let the voice of the heretic speak from the dungeon-racks of the Inquisition; that of the "true believer" from the scaffolds of Elizabeth — most Christian Queen; let the voices of the murdered come up from the squares of Paris, the plains of the Low Countries, from the streets of Antioch, Byzantium, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Damascus, Rome, Mexico; from the wheels, racks, and gibbets of the world; let the men who died in religious wars, always the bloodiest and most remorseless; the women, whom nothing could save from a fate yet more awful; the babes, newly born, who perished in the sack and conflagation of idolatrous and heretical cities, when for the sake of religion men violated its every precept, and in the name of God broke down his law, and trampled his image into bloody dust;— let all these speak, to admonish, and to blame.

But it is not well to rest on general terms alone. Paul had no little fanaticism, when he persecuted the Christians; kept the garments of men who stoned Stephen. Moses had much of it, if as the story goes, he commanded the extirpation of nations of idolaters, millions of men, virtuous as the Jews; Joshua, Samuel, David, had much of it, and executed schemes bloody as a murderer's most sanguine dream. It has been both the foe and the auxiliary of the Christian church. There is a long line of fanatics, extending from the time of Jesus reaching from century to century, marching on from age to age, with the banner of the cross over their heads, and the gospel on their tongues, and fire and sword in their hands.* The last of that Apocalyptic rabble has not as yet passed by. Let the clouds of darkness hide them. What need to tell of our own fathers; what they suffered, what they inflicted; their crime is fresh and unatoned. Rather let us take the wings of an angel, and fly away from scenes so awful, the slaughter-house of souls.

But the milder forms of fanaticism we cannot escape. They meet us in the theological war of extermination, which sect now wars with sect, pulpit with pulpit, man with man. If one would seek specimens of superstition in its milder form, let him open a popular commentary on the Bible, or read much of what weakish matter which circulates in what men call, as if in mockery, "good, pious books." If he would find fanaticism in its modern and more Pharisaic shape, let him open the sectarian newspapers, or read theological polemics. To what mean uses may we not descend? The spirit of a Caligula and a Dominic, of Alva and Ignatius stares at men in the street. It can

* See the Book of Revelation, passim.

only bay in the distance; it dares not bite. Poor, craven fanaticism! fallen like Lucifer, never to hope again. Like Pope and Pagan in the story, he sits chained by the wayside, to grin and gibber, and howl and snarl, as the pilgrim goes by, singing the song of the fearless and free, on the highway to heaven, with his girdle about him and white robe on. Poor fanaticism, who was drunk with the blood of the saints, and in his debauch, lifted his horn and pushed at the Almighty, and slew the children of God,— he shall revel but in the dreamy remembrance of his ancient crime; his teeth shall be fleshed no more in the limbs of the living.

These two morbid states just past over, represent the most hideous forms of human degradation; where the foulest passions are at their foulest work; where malice, which a devil might envy, and which might make hell darker with its frown; where hate and rancor build up their organizations and ply their arts. In man there is a mixture of good and evil. "A being darkly wise and poorly great," he has in him somewhat of the angel and something of the devil. In fanaticism, the angel sleeps and the devil drives. But let us leave the hateful theme.*

* A powerful priesthood has usually had great influence in promoting fanaticism of the most desperate character. One need only look over the history of persecutions in all ages to see this. We see it among the Hebrews, the Germans, the Druids; the nations that opposed the spread of Christianity. The Christian church itself has erected monuments enough to perpetuate the fact. The story of Haman and Mordecai is no bad allegory of the conflict between the orthodox priesthood and the unorganized heretics.

III. *Of Solid Piety.*

The legitimate and perfect action of the religious element takes place when it exists in harmonious combination with reason, conscience, and affection. Then it is not hatred, and not fear, but LOVE BEFORE GOD. It produces the most beautiful development of human nature; the golden age, the fairest Eden of life, the kingdom of heaven. Its deity is the God of infinite power, wisdom, justice, love, and holiness — fidelity to himself,— within whose encircling arms it is beautiful to be. The demands it makes are to keep the law he has written in the heart, to be good, to do good, to love men, to love God. It may use forms, prayers, dogmas, ceremonies, priests, temples, sabbaths, festivals, and fasts; yes, sacrifices if it will, as means, not ends; symbols of a sentiment, not substitutes for it. Its substance is love of God; its piety the form, morality the love of men; its temple a pure heart; its sacrifice a divine life. The end it proposes is, to reunite the man with God, till he thinks God's thought, which is truth; feels God's feelings, which is love, will God's will, which is the eternal right; thus finding God in the sense wherein he is not far from any one of us; becoming one with him, and so partaking the divine nature. The means to this high end are an extinction of all in man that opposes God's law; a perfect obedience to Him as he speaks in reason, conscience, affection. It leads through active obedience to an absolute trust, a perfect love; to the complete harmony of the finite man with the infinite God, and man's will coalesces in that of him who is all in all. Then faith and knowledge are the same thing, reason and revelation do not conflict, desire and duty go hand in hand, and

strew man's path with flowers. Desire has become dutiful, and duty desirable. The divine spirit incarnates itself in the man. The riddle of the world is solved. Perfect love casts our fear. Then religion demands no particular actions, forms, or modes of thought. The man's ploughing is holy as his prayer; his daily bread as the smoke of his sacrifice; his home sacred as his temple; his work-day and his sabbath are alike God's day. His priest is the holy spirit within him; faith and works his communion of both kinds. He does not sacrifice reason to religion, nor religion to reason. Brother and sister, they dwell together in love. A life harmonious and beautiful, conducted by righteousness, filled full with truth and enchanted by love to men and God,— this is the service he pays to the father of all. Belief does not take the place of life. Capricious austerity atones for no duty left undone. He loves religion as a bride, for her own sake, not for what she brings. He lies low in the hand of God. The breath of the father is on him.

If joy comes to this man, he rejoices in its rosy light. His wealth, his wisdom, his power, is not for himself alone, but for all God's children. Nothing is his which a brother needs more than he. Like God himself, he is kind to the thankless and unmerciful. Purity without and piety within; these are his heaven, both present and to come. Is not his flesh as holy as his soul — his body a temple of God?

If trouble comes on him, which prudence could not foresee, nor strength overcome, nor wisdom escape from, he bears it with a heart serene and full of peace. Over every gloomy cavern, and den of despair, hope arches her rainbow; the ambrosial light descends. Religion shows him, that, out of desert rocks, black and

savage, where the vulture has her home, where the storm and the avalanche are born, and whence they descend, to crush and to kill; out of these hopeless cliffs falls the river of life, which flows for all, and makes glad the people of God. When the storm and the avalanche sweep from him all that is dearest to mortal hope, is he comfortless? Out of the hard marble of life, the deposition of a few joys and many sorrows, of birth and death, and smiles and grief, he hews him the beautiful statue of religious tranquility. It stands ever beside him, with the smile of heavenly satisfaction on its lip, and its trusting finger pointing to the sky.

The true religious man, amid all the ills of time, keeps a serene forehead, and entertains a peaceful heart. Thus going out and coming in amid all the trials of the city, the agony of the plague, the horrors of the thirty tyrants, the fierce democracy abroad, the fiercer ill at home, the saint, the sage of Athens, was still the same. Such an one can endure hardness; can stand alone and be content; a rock amid the waves, lonely, but not moved. Around him the few or many may scream their screams, or cry their clamors; calumniate or blaspheme. What is it all to him, but the cawing of the sea-bird about that solitary and deep-rooted stone? So swarms of summer flies, and spiteful wasps, may assail the branches of an oak, which lifts its head, storm-tried and old, above the hills. They move a leaf, or bend a twig by their united weight. Their noise, fitful and malicious, elsewhere might frighten the sheep in the meadows. Here it becomes a placid hum. It joins the wild whisper of the leaves. It swells the breezy music of the tree, but makes it bear no acorn less.

He fears no evil, God is his armor against fate. He rejoices in his trials, and Jeremiah sings psalms in his dungeon, and Daniel prays three times a day with his window up, that all may hear, and Nebuchadnezzar cast him to the lions if he will; Luther will go to the Diet at Worms, if it rain enemies for nine days running; "though the devils be thick as the tiles on the roof." Martyred Stephen sees God in the clouds. The victim at the stake glories in the fire he lights, which shall shine all England through. Yes, Paul, an old man, forsaken of his friends, tried by many perils, daily expecting an awful death, sits comforted in his dungeon. The Lord stands by and says, Fear not, Paul, Lo, I am with thee to the world's end. The tranquil saint can say, I know whom I have served. I have not the spirit of fear, but joy. I am ready to be sacrificed. Such trials prove the soul as gold is proved. The dross perishes in the fire; but the virgin metal — it comes brighter from the flame. What is it for such a man to be scourged, forsaken, his name a proverb, counted as the offscouring of the world? There is that in him which looks down millions. Cast out, he is not in dismay; forsaken — never less alone. Slowly and soft the soul of faith comes into the man. He knows that he is seen by the pure and terrible eyes of Infinity. He feels the sympathy of the soul of all, and says, with modest triumph, I am not alone, for thou art with me. Mortal affections may cease their melody; but the infinite speaks to his soul comfort too deep for words, and too divine. What if he have not the sun of human affection to cheer him? The awful faces of the stars look from the serene depths of divine love, and seem to say, "Well done." What if the sweet music of human sympathy vanish

before the discordant curse of his brother man? The melody of the spheres — so sweet we heed it not when tried less sorely — rolls in upon the soul its tranquil tide, and that same word, which was in the beginning, says, "Thou art my beloved Son and in thee am I well pleased." Earth is overcome, and heaven won.

It is well for mankind that God now and then raises up a hero of the soul; exposes him to grim trials in the fore-front of the battle; sustains him there, that we may know what nobility is in man, and how near him God; to show that greatness in the religious man is only needed to be found; that his charity does not expire with the quiverings of his flesh; that this hero can end his breath with a "Father, forgive them."

Man everywhere is the measure of man. There is nothing which the flesh and the devil can inflict in their rage, but the holy spirit can bear in its exceeding peace. The art of the tormentor is less than the nature of the suffering soul. All the denunciations of all that sat on Moses's seat, or have since climbed to that of the Messiah; the scorn of the contemptuous; the fury of the passionate; the wrath of a monarch, and the roar of his armies; all these are to a religious soul but the buzzing of the flies about that mountain oak. There is nothing that prevails against truth.

Now in some men religion is a continual growth. They are always in harmony with God. Silently and unconscious, erect as a palm tree, they grow up to the measure of a man. To them reason and religion are of the same birth. They are born saints; Aborigines of heaven. Betwixt their idea of life and their fact of life there has at no time been a gulf. But others join themselves to the armada of sin and get scarred all over with wounds as they do thankless battle in that

leprous host. Before these men become religious, there must be a change,— well-defined, deeply marked,— a change that will be remembered. The saints who have been sinners — tell us of the struggle and desperate battle that goes on between the flesh and the spirit. It is as if the devil and the archangel contended. Well says John Bunyan, The devil fought with me weeks long, and I with the devil. To take the leap of Niagara, and stop when half-way down, and by their proper motion reascend — is no slight thing, nor the remembrance thereof like to pass away.

This passage from sin to salvation; this second birth of the soul, as both Christians and heathens call it, is one of the many mysteries of man. Two elements meet in the consciousness. There is a negation of the past; an affirmation of the future. Terror and hope, penitence and faith rush together in that moment and a new life begins. The character gradually grows over the wounds of sin. With bleeding feet the man retreads his way, but gains at last the mountain top of life and wonders at the tortuous track he left behind.

Shall it be said that religion is the great refinement of the world; its tranquil star that never sets? Need it be told that all nature works in its behalf; that every mute and every living thing seems to repeat God's voice, Be perfect; that nature, which is the *out-ness* of God, favors religion, which is the *in-ness* of man, and so God works with us? Heathens knew it many centuries ago. It has long been known that religion — in its true estate — created the deepest welfare of man. Socrates, Seneca, Plutarch, Antoninus, Fenelon can tell us this. It might well be so. Religion comes from what is strongest, deepest, most beautiful

and divine; lays no rude hand on soul or sense; condemns no faculty as base. It sets no bounds to reason but truth; none to affection but love; none to desire but duty; none to the soul but perfection; and these are not limits but the charter of infinite freedom.

No doubt there is joy in the success of earthly schemes. There is joy to the miser as he satiates his prurient palm with gold: there is joy for the fool of fortune when his gaming brings a prize. But what is it? His request is granted; but leanness enters his soul. There is delight in feasting on the bounties of earth, the garment in which God veils the brightness of his face; in being filled with the fragrant loveliness of flowers; the song of birds; the hum of bees; the sounds of ocean; the rustle of the summer wind, heard at evening in the pine tops; in the cool running brooks; in the majestic sweep of undulating hills; the grandeur of untamed forests; the majesty of the mountain; in the morning's virgin beauty; in the maternal grace of evening, and the sublime and mystic pomp of night. Nature's silent sympathy — how beautiful it is.

There is joy no doubt there is joy, to the mind of genius, when thought bursts on him as the tropic sun rending a cloud; when long trains of ideas sweep through his soul, like constellated orbs before an angel's eye; when sublime thoughts and burning words rush to the heart; when nature unveils her secret truth, and some great law breaks, all at once, upon a Newton's mind, and chaos ends in light; when the hour of his inspiration and the joy of his genius is on him, 't is then that this child of heaven feels a godlike delight. 'Tis sympathy with truth.

There is a higher and more tranquil bliss, when

heart communes with heart; when two souls unite in one, like mingling dew-drops on a rose, that scarcely touch the flower, but mirror the heavens in their little orbs; when perfect love transforms two souls, either man's or woman's, each to the other's image; when one heart beats in two bosoms; one spirit speaks with a divided tongue; when the same soul is eloquent in mutual eyes — there is a rapture deep, serene, heart-felt, and abiding in this mysterious fellow-feeling with a congenial soul, which puts to shame the cold sympathy of nature, and the ecstatic but short-lived bliss of genius in his high and burning hour.

But the welfare of religion is more than each or all of these. The glad reliance that comes upon the man; the sense of trust; a rest with God; the soul's exceeding peace; the universal harmony; the infinite within; sympathy with the soul of all — is bliss that words cannot portray. He only knows who feels. The speech of a prophet cannot tell the tale. No: not if a seraph touched his lips with fire. In the high hour of religious visitation from the living God, there seems to be no separate thought; the tide of universal life sets through the soul. The thought of self is gone. It is a little accident to be a king or a clown, a parent or a child. Man is at one with God, and He is all in all. Neither the loveliness of nature; neither the joy of genius, nor the sweet breathing of congenial hearts, that make delicious music as they beat,— neither one nor all of these can equal the joy of the religious soul that is at one with God, so full of peace that prayer is needless. This deeper joy gives an added charm to the former blessings. Nature undergoes a new transformation. A story tells that when the rising sun fell on Memnon's statue it wakened music in that breast

of stone. Religion does the same with nature. From the shining snake to the waterfall, it is all eloquent of God. As to John in the Apocalypse, there stands an angel in the sun; the seraphim hang over every flower; God speaks in each little grass that fringes a mountain rock. Then even genius is wedded to a greater bliss. His thoughts shine more brilliant, when set in the light of religion. Friendship and love it renders infinite. The man loves God when he but loves his friend. This is the joy religion gives; its perennial rest; its everlasting life. It comes not by chance. It is the possession of such as ask and toil, and toil and ask. It is withheld from none, as other gifts. Nature tells little to the deaf, the blind, the rude. Every man is not a genius, and has not his joy. Few men can find a friend that is the world to them. That triune sympathy is not for every one. But this welfare of religion, the deepest, truest, the everlasting, the sympathy with God, lies within the reach of all his sons.

BOOK II

"Reason is *natural revelation,* whereby the eternal father of light and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties; *Revelation* is *natural reason enlarged* by a new set of discoveries, communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. So that he that takes away reason, to make way for revelation puts out the light of both, and does much-what the same, as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope." — Locke, *Essay,* Book IV. Chap. XIX. § 4. [Added by Locke in his fourth edition.]

BOOK II

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT TO GOD, OR A DISCOURSE OF INSPIRATION

CHAPTER I

THE IDEA AND CONCEPTION OF GOD

Two things are necessary to render religion possible; namely, a religious faculty in man, and God out of man as the objcet of that religious faculty. The existence of these two things admitted, religion follows necessarily, as vision from the existence of a seeing faculty in man, and that of light out of him. Now the existence of the religious element, as it was said before, implies its object. We have naturally a sentiment of God. Reason gives us an idea of him. But to these we superadd a conception of him. Can this definite conception be adequate? Certainly not. The idea of God, as the infinite, may exhaust the most transcendent imagination; it is the highest idea of which man is capable. But is God tc be measured by our idea? Shall the finite circumscribe the infinite? The existence of God is so plainly and deeply writ both in us and out of us, in what we are, and what we experience, that the humblest and the loftiest minds may be satisfied of this reality, and may know that there is an absolute cause; a ground of all things; the infinite of power, wisdom, justice, love, whereon

we may repose, wherein we may confide. This conclusion comes alike from the spontaneous sentiment, and premeditated reflection; from the intuition of reason, and the process of reasoning. This idea of God is clear and distinct; not to be confounded with any other idea.

But when we attempt to go further, to give a logical description of deity, its nature and essence; to define and classify its attributes; to make a definite conception of God as of the finite objects of the senses or the understanding, going into minute details, then we have nothing but our own subjective notions, which do not, of necessity, have an objective reality corresponding thereto. All men may know God as the infinite. His nature and essence are past finding out. But we know God only in part — from the manifestation of divinity, seen in nature, felt in man; manifestations of matter and spirit. Are these the whole of God; is man his measure? Then is he exhausted, and not infinite. We affix the terms of human limitation to God, and speak of his personality; some limiting it to one, others extending it to three, to seven, to thirty or to many millions of persons. Can such terms apply to the infinite? We talk of a personal God. If thereby we only deny that he has the limitations of unconscious matter, no wrong is done. But our conception of personality is that of finite personality, limited by human imperfections; hemmed in by time and space; restricted by partial emotions, displeasure, wrath, ignorance, caprice. Can this be said of God? If matter were conscious, as Locke thinks it possible, it must predicate materiality of God as persons predicate personality of him. We apply the term impersonal. If it mean God has not the limitations of our personality it is

well. But if it mean that he has those of unconscious matter, it is worse than the other term. Can God be personal and conscious, as Joseph and Peter; unconscious and impersonal as a moss or the celestial ether? No man will say it. Where then is the philosophic value of such terms?

The nature of God is past finding out. "There is no searching of his understanding." As the absolute cause, God must contain in himself, potentially, the ground of consciousness, of personality — yes, of unconsciousness and impersonality. But to apply these terms to him, seems to me, a vain attempt to fathom the abyss of the godhead and report the soundings. Will our line reach to the bottom of God? There is nothing on earth, or in heaven, to which we can compare him; of course we can have no image of him in the mind.*

There has been enough dogmatism respecting the nature, essence, and personality of God; respecting the metaphysics of the deity, and that by men, who, perhaps, did not thoroughly understand all about the nature, essence, and metaphysics of man. It avails nothing. Meanwhile the greatest religious souls that have

* There has been some controversy on this question of the *personality* of God in modern times. The writings of Spinoza, both now and formerly, have caused much discussion of this point. The capital maxim of Spinoza on this head is, all attempts to *determine* the nature of God, are a negation of him. *Determinatio negatio est.* See Ep. 50, p. 634, ed. Paulus. He thinks God has *self-conscious personality* only in self-conscious persons, i. e. men. Ethic. II. Prop. 11, and Coroll.

Some have thought to help the matter by the Trinitarian hypothesis. If there were but one man in the universe, he could not indeed, it is said, have our conception of personality, which demands other persons. This condition is fulfilled for the divine being soon as we admit a trinity in unity. Mystical writers have always inclined to a denial of the personality of

ever been, are content to fall back on the sentiment and the idea of God, and confess that none by searching can perfectly find him out. They can say, therefore, with an old heathen, "Since he cannot be fully declared by any one name, though compounded of never so many, therefore is he rather to be called by every name, he being both one and all things; so that [to express the whole of God,] either every thing must be called by his name, or he by the name of every thing." * "Call him, therefore," says another pagan, "by all names, for all can express but a whisper of him; call him rather by no name, for none can declare his power, wisdom, and goodness."

Malebranche says, with as much philosophy as piety, "One ought not so much to call God a spirit, in order to express positively what he is, as in order to signify that he is not matter. He is a being infinitely perfect. Of this we cannot doubt. But in the same manner we ought not to imagine . . . that he is clothed with a human body . . . under color that that figure was the most perfect of any; so neither ought we to imagine that the spirit of God has human ideas, or bears any resemblance to our spirit, under color that we know nothing more perfect than the human mind. We

God. Thus Plotinus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Scotus Erigena, Meister Eckart, Tauler, and Böhme, to mention no more, deny it. On this subject see Hegel, Lectures on the proofs of the existence of God, at the end of Philosophie der Religion. Encyclopädie, § 562, et seq., 2d ed. See the subject touched upon by Strauss, Glaubenslehre, § 33. See also Nitzsch's review of Strauss in Studien und Kritiken for Jan. 1, 1842. Sengler, ubi sup., B. I. p. Abs. II.–IV.

In reference to Spinoza, see the controversial writings of Messrs. Norton and Ripley, above referred to.

* See the Asclepian Dialogue, and also the passages from Seneca and Julian, cited in Cudworth, Vol. II. p. 679, et seq., Ch. IV. § 32.

ought rather to believe that as he comprehends the perfection of matter, without being material, . . . so he comprehends also the perfections of created spirits without being spirit, in the manner we conceive spirit. That his true name is, HE THAT IS, or in other words being without restriction, all being, the being infinite and universal." * Still we have a positive idea of God. It is the most positive of all. It is implied logically in every idea that we form, so that as God himself is the being of all existence; the background and cause of all things that are; the reality of all appearance, so the idea of God is the central truth, as it were, of all other ideas whatever. The objects of all other ideas are dependent, and not final; the object of this independent and ultimate. This idea of an independent and infinite cause, therefore, is necessarily presupposed by the conception of any dependent and finite effect. For example, a man forms a notion of his own existence. This notion involves that of dependence, which conducts him back to that on which dependence rests. He has no complete notion of his own existence without the notion of dependence; nor of that without the object on which he depends. Take our stand where we may, and reason, we come back logically to this which is the primitive fact in all our intellectual conceptions, just as each point in the circumference of a circle is a point in the radius thereof, and this leads

* Recherches de la Vérité, Liv. III. Ch. IX. as cited in Hume, Dialogues concerning Nat. Rel. Vol. II. p. 469. See Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, p. 441–540, 7th ed. Weisse, Die Idee der Gottheit; 1833. Some have been unwilling to attribute *being* to the deity, since we have no conception nor knowledge of *being in itself,* still less of *infinite being.* Our knowledge of *being* is only of *being this and that,* a *conditioned being,* which is not predicable of God.

straightway to the centre, whence they all proceed.*

But the idea of God as a being of infinite power, wisdom, love,— in one word, the absolute — does not satisfy. It seems cold; we call it abstract. We are not beings of reason alone; so are not satisfied with mere ideas. We have imagination, feelings, limited affections, understanding, flesh and blood. Therefore we want a conception of God which shall answer to this complex nature of ours. Man may be said to live in the world of eternity, or abstract truth; that of time, or historical events; that of space, or of concrete things. Some men want, therefore, not only an idea for the first, but a conception for the second, and a form for the third. Accordingly the feelings, fear, reverence, devotion, love, naturally personify God; humanize the deity, and represent the infinite under the limitations of a finite and imperfect being, whom we "can know all about." He has the thoughts, feelings, passions, limitations of a man; is subject to time and space; sees, remembers, has a form. This is anthropomorphism. It is well in its place. Some rude men seem to require it. They must paint to themselves a deity with a form — the ancient of days; a venerable monarch seated on a throne, surrounded by troops of followers. But it must be remembered all this is poetry; this personal and anthropomorphitic conception

* This is not the place to attempt a proof of God's existence. In Book I. Ch. II. I could only hint at the sources of argument. See in Weisse, Kant, and Strauss, a critcism on the various means of proof resorted to by different Philosophers. Weisse divides these proofs into three classes. 1. The *Ontological* argument, which leads to Pantheism; II. The *Cosmological,* which leads to Deism; and III. the *Theological,* which leads to pure Theism. See Leibnitz, Théodicée, Pt. I. § 7, p. 506, ed. Erdmann; 1840, and his Epist. ad Bierlingium, in his Epp. ad div. Ed. Kortholt, Vol. IV. p. 21 (cited by Strauss, ubi sup).

is a phantom of the brain that has no existence independent of ourselves. A poet personifies a mountain or the moon; addresses it as if it wore the form of man, could see and feel, had human thoughts, sentiments, hopes and pleasures and expectations. What the poet's fancy does for the mountain, the feelings of reverence and devotion do for the idea of God. They clothe it with a human personality, because that is the highest which is known to us. Men would comprehend the deity; they can only apprehend him. A beaver, or a reindeer, if possessed of religious faculties, would also conceive of the deity with the limitations of its own personality, as a beaver or a reindeer — whose faculties as such were perfect; but the conception, like our own, must be only subjective, for even man is no measure of God.*

Now by reasoning we lay aside the disguises of the deity, which the feelings have wrapped about the idea of him. We separate the substantial from the phenomenal elements in the conception of God. We divest it of all particular form; all sensual or corporeal attributes, and have no image of God in the mind. He is spirit,† and therefore free from the limitations of space. He is nowhere in particular, but everywhere in general, essentially and vitally omnipresent. Denying all particular form, we must affirm of him universal being.

The next step in the analysis is to lay aside all par-

* See Xenophanes as cited above by Eusebius, P. E. XIII. 13. See Karsten, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 35, et seq. The passage from Seneca, De Superstitione, preserved by Augustine, Civ. Dei Lib. VI. C. 10. Seneca, Opp. ed. Paris, 1829, IV. p. 39, et seq.

† I use the term Spirit simply as a *negation of the limitations of matter.* We cannot tell the *essence* of God.

tial action of the deity. He is equally the cause of the storm and the calm sunshine; of the fierceness of the lion and the lamb's gentleness so long as both obey the laws they are made to keep. All the natural action in the material world is God's action, whether the wind blows a plank and the shipwrecked woman who grasps it to the shore, or scatters a fleet and sends families to the bottom. But infinite action or causation must be attributed to him.

Then all mental processes, like those of men, are separated from the idea of him. We cannot say he thinks, for that is to reason from the known to the unknown, which is impossible to the omniscient; nor that he plans or consults with himself, for that implies the infirmity of not seeing the best way all at once; nor that he remembers or foresees, for that implies a restriction in time, a past and a present, while the infinite must fill eternity, all time, as well as immensity all space. We cannot attribute to him reflection, which is after-thought, nor imagination, which is fore-thought, since both imply limited faculties. Judgment, fancy, comparison, induction — these are the operations of finite minds. They are not to be applied to the divine being except as figures of speech; then they merely represent an unknown emotion. We have got a name but no real thing. But infinite knowing must be his.

We go still further in this analysis of the conception of God, and all partial feeling must be denied. We cannot say that he hates; is angry, or grieved; repents; is moved by the special prayer of James and John; that he is sad to-day and to-morrow joyful; all these are human, limitations of our personality, and are no

more to be ascribed to God than the form of the reindeer, or the shrewdness of the beaver. But love implies no finiteness. This we conceive as infinite.

At the end of the analysis, what is left? Being, Cause, Knowledge, Love, each with no conceivable limitation. To express it in a word, a being of infinite power, wisdom, justice, love, and holiness, fidelity to himself. Thus by an analysis of the conception of God, we find in fact or by implication, just what was given synthetically by the intuition of reason. But do these qualities exhaust the deity? Surely not. They only form our idea of him. It is idle, impious in men to say, the finite creature of yesterday can measure him who is the all in all, the true, the holy, the good, the altogether-beautiful. Let a man look into the Milky-way, and strive to conceive of the mind that is the cause, the will, of all those centres to unknow worlds, and ask What can I know of him? Nay, let a man turn over in his hand a single crystal of snow, and consider its elements, their history, transformation, influence, and try to grasp up the philosophy of this little atom of matter, and he will learn to bow before the thought of him, and say there is no searching of his understanding. If there are other orders of beings higher than ourselves, their idea of God must include elements above our reach. The finite approximates, but cannot reach the infinite.

In criticizing the conception of God, I would not attempt the fool's task, to define and describe God's nature, but to separate our idea of him from all other ideas; not to tell all in God that answers to the idea in man,— that of course is impossible, but to separate

the eternal idea from the transient conception; to declare the positive and necessary existence of this idea in man; of its object out of man, while I deny the existence of any limitations of human personality, or of our anthropomorphitic consciousness in the deity.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATION OF NATURE TO GOD

To determine the relation of man to God it is well to determine first the relation of God to nature — the material world — that we may have the force of the analogy of that relation to aid us. Conscious man may be very dissimilar to unconscious matter, but yet their relations to God are analogous. Both depend on him. To make out the point and decide the relation of God to nature we must start from the idea of God, which was laid down above, a being of infinite power, wisdom, justice, love, and holiness. Now to make the matter clear as noonday, God is either present in all space, or not present in all space. If infinite, he must be present everywhere in general, and not limited to any particular spot, as an old writer so beautifully says: "Even heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him." * Heathen writers are full of such expressions.† God, then, is universally present in the world of matter. He is the substantiality of matter. The circle of his being in space has an infinite radius. We cannot say, Lo here or Lo there — for he is everywhere. He fills all nature with his overflowing currents; without him it were not. His presence gives it existence; his will its law and force; his wisdom its order; his goodness its beauty.

It follows unavoidably, from the idea of God, that he is present everywhere in space; not transiently

* See, too, the beautiful statement in Ps. CXXXIX. 1–13.

† See those in Cudworth, Chap. IV. § 28, and elsewhere.

present, now and then, but immanently present, always; his centre here; his circumference nowhere; just as present in the eye of an emmet as in the Jewish holy of holies, or the sun itself. We may call common what God has cleansed with his presence; but there is no corner of space so small, no atom of matter so despised and little but God, the infinite, is there.*

Now, to push the inquiry nearer the point. The nature or substance of God, as represented by our idea of him, is divisible or not divisible. If infinite he must be indivisible, a part of God cannot be in this point of space, and another in that; his power in the sun, his wisdom in the moon, and his justice in the earth. He must be wholly, vitally, essentially present as much in one point as in another point, or all points; as essentially present in each point at any one moment of time as at any other or all moments of time. He is there not idly present but actively, as much now as at creation. Divine omnipotence can neither slumber nor sleep. Was God but transiently active in matter at creation, his action now passed away? From the idea of him it follows that he is immanent in the world, however much he also transcends the world. "Our Father worketh hitherto," and for this reason nature works, and so has done since its creation. There is no spot the foot of hoary time has trod on but it is instinct with God's activity. He is the ground of nature; what is permanent in the passing; what is real in the apparent. All nature then is but an exhibition of God to the senses; the veil of smoke on which his shadow falls; the dew-drop in which the heaven of his magnifi-

* See the judicious remarks of Lord Brougham, Dialogue on Instinct, Dial. II. near the end. Dr. Palfrey, in his Dudleian Lecture, attributes only a qualified omnipresence to the deity.

cence is poorly imaged. The sun is but a sparkle of his splendor. Endless and without beginning flows forth the stream of divine influence that encircles and possesses the all of things. From God it comes, to God it goes. The material world is perpetual growth; a continual transfiguration, renewal that never ceases. Is this without God? Is it not because God, who is ever the same, flows into it without end? It is the fulness of God that flows into the crystal of the rock, the juices of the plant, the life of the emmet and the elephant. He penetrates and pervades the world. All things are full of him, who surrounds the sun, the stars, the universe itself; "goes through all lands, the expanse of oceans, and the profound heaven." *

Inanimate matter, by itself, it dependent; incapable of life, motion, or even existence. To assert the opposite is to make it a God. In its present state it has no will. Yet there is in it existence, motion, life. The smallest molecule in a ray of polarized light and the largest planet in the system exist and move as if possessed of a will, powerful, regular, irresistible. The powers of nature, then, that of gravitation, electricity, growth, what are they but modes of God's action? If we look deep into the heart of this mystery, such must be the conclusion. Nature is moved by the first mover; beautified by him who is the sum of beauty; animated by him who is of all the creator, defence, and life.†

* Virgil, Georgic, IV. 222. See many passages cited by Cudworth, chap. IV. § 31, p. 664, et seq. 455, et seq. and the passages collected from Tschaleddin Rumi by Rückert, in his Gedichte, and Tholuck, Blüthensammlung aus der morgenlandischen Mystik.

† Cudworth makes three hypotheses; either, 1. *All things happen* in nature by *the fortuitous concourse of atoms,* and this it

Such, then, is the relation of God to matter up to this point. He is immanent therein and perpetually active. Now to go further, if this be true, it would seem that the various objects and things in nature were fitted to express and reveal different degrees and measures of the divine influence, so to say; that this degree of manifestation in each depends on the capacity which God has primarily bestowed upon it;* that the material but inorganic, the vegetable but inanimate, and the animal but irrational world, received each as high a mode of divine influence as its several nature would allow.

Then, to sum up all in brief, the material world with its objects sublimely great, or meanly little, as we judge them; its atoms of dust, its orbs of fire; the rock that stands by the sea-shore, the water that wears it away; the worm, a birth of yesterday, which we trample underfoot; the streets of constellations that gleam perennial overhead; the aspiring palm tree fixed to one spot, and the lions that are sent out free, these incarnate and make visible all of God their several natures will admit. If man were not spiritual and could yet conceive of the aggregate of invisible things, he might call it God, for he could go no further.

Now, as God is infinite, imperfection is not to be

is Atheism to suppose; or, 2. There is in nature a *formative faculty "a plastic nature,"* which does the work; or, 3. Each act is done *immediately* by God. He, it is well known, adopts the second alternative. See chap. III. § 37. See also More's Enchiridion Metaphysicum; Antidote against Atheism, Book II.; Apol. pro Cartesio, p. 115, et seq. On the *Transcendency* of God, see Descartes, Princip. P. I. No. 21, et al. Leibnitz, Théod. No. 385, et al.

* I will not say there is not, in the abstract, as much of divine influence in a *wheat-straw* as in a *world*. But in reference to ourselves there *appear* to be *various degrees* of it.

spoken of him. His will therefore — if we may so use that term — is always the same. As nature has of itself no power, and God is present and active therein, it must obey and represent his unalterable will. Hence, seeing the uniformity of operation, that things preserve their identity, we say they are governed by a law that never changes. It is so. But this law — what is it but the will of God; a mode of divine action? It is this in the last analysis. The apparent secondary causes do not prevent this conclusion.

The things of nature, having no will obey this law from necessity.* They thus reflect God's image and make real his conception — if we may use such language with this application. They are tools, not artists. We never in nature see the smallest departure from nature's law. The granite, the grass, keep their law; none go astray from the flock of stars; fire does not refuse to burn, nor water to be wet. We look backwards and forwards, but the same law records everywhere the obedience that is paid it. Our confidence in the uniformity of nature's law is complete, in other words, in the fact that God is always the same; his modes of action always the same. This is true of the inorganic, the vegetable, the animal world.† Each thing keeps its law with no attempt at violation

* I use the term *obedience* figuratively. Of course there is no *real* obedience without *power to disobey*.

† M. Leroux, an acute and brilliant but fanciful writer, thinks the capabilities of man change by civilization, and, which is to the present point, that the *animals* advance also; that the bee and the beaver are on the march towards perfection, and have made some progress already. However he may make out the case *metaphysically*, it would be puzzling to settle the matter by facts. But if his hypothesis were admissible, it would not militate with the doctrine in the text.

of it.* From this obedience comes the regularity and order apparent in nature. Obeying the law of God, his omnipotence is on its side. To oppose a law of nature, therefore, is to oppose the deity. It is sure to redress itself.

But these created things have no consciousness, so far as we know, at least nothing which is the same with our self-consciousness. They have no moral will; no power in general to do otherwise than as they do. Their action is not the result of forethought, reflection, judgment, voluntary obedience to an acknowledged law. No one supposes the bison, the rosebush, and the moon, reflect in themselves; make up their mind and say, "Go to, now, let us bring up our young, or put forth our blossoms, or give light at nightfall, because it is right to do so, and God's law." Their obedience is unavoidable. They do what they cannot help doing.† Their obedience, therefore, is not their merit, but their necessity. It is power they passively yield to; not a duty they voluntarily and consciously perform. All the action, therefore, of the material, inorganic, vegetable, and animal world is mechanical, vital, or, at the utmost, instinctive; not self-conscious, the result of private will.‡ There is, therefore, no room for caprice

* From this view it does not follow that animals are *mere machines,* with no consciousness, only that they have not freewill. However, in some of the superior animals there is some small degree of freedom apparent. The dog and the elephant seem sometimes to exercise a mind, and to become in some measure emancipated, from their instincts. On this curious question, see Descartes, Epist. P. I. Ep. 27, 67. Henry More, Epist. ad Cartesium.

† This point has been happily touched upon by Hooker, Eccles. Polity, Book I. chap. III. § 2. See his curious reflections in the following sections.

‡ I have not the presumption to attempt to draw a line between these three departments of Nature, nor to tell what is

in this department. The crystal must form itself after a prescribed pattern; the leaf assume a given shape; the bee build her cell with six angles. The mantle of destiny is girt about these things. To study the laws of nature, therefore, is to study the modes of God's action. Science becomes sacred, and passes into a sort of devotion. Well says the old sage, "Geometry is the praise of God." It reveals the perfections of the divine mind, for God manifests himself in every object of science, in the half-living molecules of powdered-wood; in the comet with its orbit which imagination cannot surround; in the cones and cycloids of the mathematician, that exist nowhere in the world of concrete things, but which the conscious mind carries thither.

Since all these objects represent, more or less, the divine mind, and are in perfect harmony with it, and so

the *essence of mechanical, vital,* or *instinctive* action. I would only indicate a distinction that, to my mind, is very plain. But I cannot pretend to say where one ends and the other begins. Again, it may seem unphilosophical to deny consciousness, or even self-consciousness to the superior animals; but if they possess a self-consciousness, it is something apparently so remote from ours, that it only leads to a confusion if both are called by the same term. The functions of a plant we cannot explain by the laws of *mechanical* action; nor the function of an animal, a dog for example, by any qualities of body. On this subject see Whewell, Hist. Inductive Sciences, Book IX. chap. I.–III. Cudworth, chap. III, § 37, No. 17, et seq., has shown that there may be *sentient,* and not mere *mechanical* life, without consciousness, and therefore without *freewill.* Is not this near the truth, the God alone is *absolutely* free, and man has a *relative* freedom, the degree of which may be constantly increased? Taking a *certain stand-point,* it is true, freedom and necessity are the same thing, and may be predicated or denied of Deity indifferently, thus if God is perfect, all his action is perfect. He can do no otherwise than as he does. Perfection therefore is his *necessity,* but it is his *freedom* none the less. Here the difference is merely in words.

always at one with God, they express, it may be, all of deity which matter in these three modes can contain, and thus exhibit all of God that can be made manifest to the eye, the ear, and the other senses of man. Since these things are so, nature is not only strong and beautiful, but has likewise a religious aspect. This fact was noticed in the very earliest times; appears in the rudest worship, which is an adoration of God in nature. It will move man's heart to the latest day, and exert an influence on souls that are deepest and most holy. Who that looks on the ocean, in its anger or its play; who that walks at twilight under a mountain's brow, listens to the sighing of the pines, touched by the indolent wind of summer, and hears the light tinkle of the brook, murmuring its quiet tune,— who is there but feels the deep religion of the scene? In the heart of a city we are called away from God. The dust of man's foot, and the sooty print of his fingers are on all we see. The very earth is unnatural, and the heaven scarce seen. In a crowd of busy men which set through its streets, or flow together of an holiday; in the dust and jar, the bustle and strife of business, there is little to remind us of God. Men must build a cathedral for that. But everywhere in nature, we are carried straightway back to him. The fern, green and growing amid the frost; each little grass and lichen is a silent memento. The first bird of spring, and the last rose of summer; the grandeur or the dulness of evening and morning; the rain, the dew, the sunshine; the stars that come out to watch over the farmer's rising corn; the birds that nestle contentedly, brooding over their young, quietly tending the little strugglers with their beak,— all these have a religious significance to a thinking soul. Every violet blooms of God, each lily,

is fragrant with the presence of deity. The awful scenes of storm and lightning and thunder, seem but the sterner sounds of the great concert, wherewith God speaks to man. Is this an accident? Ay, earth is full of such "accidents." When the seer rests from religious thought, or when the world's temptations make his soul tremble, and though the spirit be willing the flesh is weak; when the perishable body weighs down the mind, musing on many things; when he wishes to draw near to God, he goes, not to the city — there conscious men obstruct him with their works — but to the meadow, spangled all over with flowers, and sung to by every bird; to the mountain, "visited all night by troops of stars;" to the ocean, the undying type of shifting phenomena and unchanging law; to the forest, stretching out motherly arms, with its mighty growth and awful shade, and there in the obedience these things pay, in their order, strength, beauty, he is encountered front to front, with the awful presence of almighty power. A voice cries to him from the thicket, "God will provide." The bushes burn with deity. Angels minister to him. There is no mortal pang, but it is allayed by God's fair voice as it whispers in nature, still and small, it may be, but moving on the face of the deep, and bringing light out of darkness.

> "Oh joy that in our embers,
> Is something that doth live,
> That Nature yet remembers
> What was so fugitive."

Now to sum up the result. It seems from the very idea of God that he must be infinitely present in each point of space. This immanence of God in matter is the basis of his influence; this is modified by the ca-

pacities of the object in nature; all of its action is God's action; its laws modes of that action. The imposition of a law then, which is perfect, and is also perfectly obeyed, though blindly and without self-consciousness, seems to be the measure of God's relation to matter. Its action therefore is only mechanical, vital, or instinctive, not voluntary and self-conscious. From the nature of these things, it must be so.

CHAPTER III

STATEMENT OF THE ANALOGY DRAWN FROM GOD'S RELATION TO NATURE

Now if God be present in matter, the analogy is that he is also present in man. But to examine this point more closely, let us set out as before from the idea of God. If he have not the limitations of matter, but is infinite, as the idea declares, then he pervades spirit as well as space; is in man as well as out of him. If it follows from the idea that he is immanent in the material world — in a moss; it follows also that he must be immanent in the spiritual world — in a man. If he is immanently active, and thus totally and essentially present, in each corner of space, and each atom of creation, then is he as universally present in all spirit. If the reverse be true, then he is not omnipresent, therefore not infinite, and of course not God. The infinite God must fill each point of spirit as of space. Here then in God's presence in the soul, is a basis laid for his direct influence on men; as his presence in nature is the basis of his direct influence there.

As in nature his influence was modified only by the capacities of material things, so here must it be modified only by the capabilities of spiritual things; there it assumed the forms of mechanical, vital, and instinctive action; here it must ascend to the form of voluntary and self-conscious action. This conclusion follows undeniably from the analogy of God's presence and activity in matter. It follows as necessarily from the idea of God, for as he is the materiality of matter, so is he the spirituality of spirit.

CHAPTER IV

THE GENERAL RELATION OF SUPPLY TO WANT

We find in nature that every want is naturally supplied. That is, there is something external to each created being to answer all the internal wants of that being. This conclusion could have been anticipated without experience, since it follows from the perfections of the deity, that all his direct works must be perfect. Experience shows this is the rule in nature. We never find a race of animals destitute of what is most needed for them, wandering up and down, seeking rest and finding none. What is most certainly needed for each is most bountifully provided. The supply answers the demand. The natural circumstances, therefore, attending a race of animals, for example, are perfect. The animal keeps perfectly the law, or condition of its nature. The result of these perfect circumstances on the one hand, and perfect obedience on the other, is this,— each animal in its natural state, attains its legitimate end, reaches perfection after its kind. Thus every sparrow in a flock is perfect in the qualities of a sparrow, at least, such is the general rule; the exceptions to it are so rare they only seem to confirm that rule.

Now to apply this general maxim to the special case of man. We are mixed beings, spirits wedded to bodies. Setting aside the religious nature of man for the moment, and for the present purpose distributing our faculties into the animal, intellectual, affectional,

and moral, let us see the relation between our fourfold wants and the supply thereof. We have certain animal wants, such as the desire of food, shelter, and comfort. Our animal welfare, even our animal existence, depends on the relation of the world to these wants, on the condition that they are supplied. Now we find in the world of nature, exterior to ourselves, a supply for these demands. It is so placed that man can reach it for himself. To speak in general terms, there is not a natural want in our body which has not its corresponding supply, placed out of the body. There is not even a disease of the body, brought upon us by disobedience of its law, but there is somewhere a remedy, at least an alleviation of that disease. The peculiar supply of peculiar wants is provided most abundantly when most needed, and where most needed; furs in the north, spices in the south, antidotes where the poison is found. God is a bountiful parent and no step-father to the body, and does not pay off, to his obedient children, a penny of satisfaction for a pound of want. Natural supply balances natural want the world over.

But this is not all. How shall man find the supply that is provided? It will be useless unless there is some faculty to mediate between it and the want. Now man is furnished with a faculty to perform his office. It is *instinct* which we have in common with the lower animals, and *understanding* which we have more exclusively, at least no other animal possessing it in the same degree with ourselves. Instinct anticipates experience. It acts spontaneously where we have no previous knowledge, yet as if we were fully possessed of ideas. It shows itself as soon as we are born, in the impulse that prompts the infant to his natural food.

It appears complete in all animals. It looks only forward, and is a perfect guide so far as it goes. The young chick pecks adroitly at the tiny worm it meets the first hour it leaves the shell.* It needs no instruction. The lower animals have nothing but instinct for their guide. It is sufficient for their purpose. They act, therefore, without reflection; from necessity, and are subordinate to their instinct, and therefore must always remain in the instinctive state.† Children and savages — who are in some respects the children of the human race — act chiefly by instinct, but constantly approach the development of the understanding.

This acts in a different way. It generalizes from experience; makes an induction from facts; a deduction from principles. It looks both backwards and forwards. The man of understanding acts from experience, reflection, forethought and habit. If he had no other impelling principle, all his action must be of this character. But though understanding be capable of indefinite increase, instinct can never be wholly extirpated from this compound being, man. The most artificial or cultivated feels the twinges of instinctive nature. The lower animals rely entirely on instinct; the savage chiefly thereon, while the civilized and matured man depends mostly on understanding for his guide. As the sphere of action enlarges, which takes place as the boy outgrows his childhood, and the savage emerges from

* See Lord Brougham, Dialogues on instinct, for some remarkable facts.

† Whewell, ubi sup. Vol. II. Pt. I. Book IX. Ch. III. Man may subdue the instinct of an animal, and apparently improve the creature, by superintending his own understanding upon it. The pliant nature of dogs and horses enables them to yield to him in this case. But they are not *really* improved in the qualities of a dog or a horse, but only become caricatures of their master's caprice.

barbarism, instinct ceases to be an adequate guide, and the understanding spontaneously develops itself to take its place.*

In respect, then, to man's animal nature, this fact remains, that there is an external supply for each internal want, and a guide to conduct from the want to the supply. This guide is adequate to the purpose. When it is followed, and thus the conditions of our animal nature complied with, the want is satisfied, becomes a source of pleasure, a means of development. In this case there is nothing miraculous intervening between the desire and its gratification. Man is hungry. Instinct leads him to the ripened fruit. He eats and is appeased. The satisfaction of the want comes naturally, by a regular law, which God has imposed upon the constitution of man. He is blessed by obeying, and cursed by violating this law. God himself does not transcend this law, but acts through it, by it, in it. We observe the law and obtain what we need. Thus for every point of natural desire in the body, there is a point of natural satisfaction out of the body. This guide conducts, from one to the other, as a radius connects the centre with the circumference. Our animal welfare is complete when the two are thus brought into contact.

Now the same rule may be shown to hold good in each other department into which we have divided the human faculties. There is something without us to correspond to each want of the intellect. This is found in the objects of nature; in the sublime, the useful, the beautiful, the common things we meet; in the ideas

* See some profound remarks on the force of the instinctive life among savages, Bancroft, ubi sup. Ch. XXII.

and conceptions that arise unavoidably when man, the thinking subject, comes intellectually in contact with external things, the object of thought. We turn to these things instinctively, at first,

> "The eye,— it cannot choose but see,
> We cannot bid the ear be still;
> Our bodies feel wher'er they be,
> Against or with our will.

Man is not sufficient for himself intellectually, more than physically. He cannot rely wholly on what he is. There is at first nothing in man but man himself; a being of multiform tendencies, and many powers lying latent — germ sheathed in germ. Without some external object to rouse the senses, excite curiosity, to stimulate the understanding, induce reflection, exercise reason, judgment, imagination,— all these faculties would sleep in their causes, unused and worthless in the soul. Obeying the instinctive tendency of the mind, which impels to thought, keeping its laws, we gain satisfaction for the intellectual desires. One after another the faculties come into action, grow up to maturity, and intellectual welfare is complete with no miracle, but by obedience to the laws of mind.

The same may be said of the affectional and moral nature of man. There is something without us to answer the demands of the affections and the moral sense, and we turn instinctively to them. Does God provide for the animal wants and no more? He is no stepfather, but a bountiful parent to the intellectual, affectional, and moral elements of his child. There is a point of satisfaction out of these, for each point of desire in them, and a guide to mediate between the two. This general rule may then be laid down, That for each animal, intellectual, affectional, moral want of

man, there is a supply set within his reach, and a guide to connect the two; that no miracle is needed to supply the want; but satisfaction is given soon as the guide is followed and the law kept, which instinct or the understanding reveals.

CHAPTER V

STATEMENT OF THE ANALOGY FROM THIS RELATION

Now it was said before, that the religious was the deepest, highest, strongest element in man, and since the wants of the lower faculties are so abundantly provided with natural means of satisfying them, the analogy leads us irresistibly to conclude, that the higher faculty would not be neglected; that here as elsewhere there must be a natural and not miraculous supply for natural wants; a natural guide to conduct from one to the other, and natural laws, or conditions to be observed, and natural satisfaction to be obtained in this way; that as God was no step-father, but a bountiful parent to the lower elements, so he must be to the higher; that as there was a point of satisfaction out of the body, mind, and heart, for each desire in it, so there must be a point of satisfaction out of the soul, for each desire in the soul. Is it God's way to take care of oxen and leave men uncared for? In a system where every spot on an insect's wing is rounded as diligently, and as carefully finished off as a world, are we to suppose the soul of man is left without natural protection? If there is a law, a permanent mode of divine action, whereby each atom of dust keeps its place and holds its own, surely we are not to dream the soul of man is left with no law for its religious life and satisfaction.

To draw the parallels still closer. By the religious consciousness we feel the want of some assured sup-

port to depend on, who has infinite power to sustain us, infinite wisdom to provide for us, infinite goodness to cherish us; as we must know the will of him on whom we depend, and thus determine what is religious truth and religious duty, in order that we may do that duty, receive that truth, obey that will, and thus obtain rest for the soul, and the highest spiritual welfare, by knowing and fulfilling its conditions, so analogy teaches that in this, as in the other case, there must be a supply for the wants, and some plain, regular, and not miraculous means, accessible to each man, whereby he can get a knowledge of this support, discover this will, and thus, by observing the proper conditions, obtain the highest spiritual welfare.

This argument for a direct connection between man and God, is only rebutted in one of these two ways: either, first, by denying that man has any religious wants; or secondly, by affirming that he is himself alone a supply to them, without need of reliance on any thing independent of himself. The last is contrary to philosophy, for, theoretically speaking, by nature, there is nothing in man, but man himself, his tendencies and powers of action and reception; in the religious element there is nothing but the religious element, as, theoretically speaking, by nature, there is in the body nothing but the body; in hunger nothing but hunger. To make man dependent on nothing but man; the religious element on nothing but the religious element, and therefore sufficient for itself, is quite as absurd as to make the body dependent only on the body; the appetite of hunger on nothing but hunger, sufficient to satisfy itself. Besides, our consciousness, and above all our religious consciousness, is that of dependence. The soul feels its direct dependence on God, as much

as the body sees its own direct dependence on matter.

If the one statement is contrary to philosophy, the other is contrary to fact. We feel religious wants; the history of man is a perpetual expression of these wants; an effort for satisfaction. It cannot be denied that we need something that shall bear the same relation to the religious element which food bears to the palate, light to the eye, sound to the ear, beauty to the imagination, truth to the understanding, friendship to the heart, and duty to conscience. How shall we pass from the want to its satisfaction? Now the force of the analogy is this — it leads us to expect such a natural satisfaction for spiritual wants, as we have for the humbler wants. The very wants themselves imply the satisfaction; soon as we begin to act, there awakes by nature a sentiment of God. Reason gives us a distinct idea of him, and from this idea also it follows that he must supply these wants.

The question then comes as to the fact: Is there, or is there not, a regular law, that is, a constant mode of operation, by which the religious wants are supplied, as by a regular law the body's wants are met? Now animated by the natural trust, or faith, which is the spontaneous action of the religious element, we should say: Yes, it must be so. God takes care of the sparrow's body; can he neglect man's soul? Then reasoning again from the general analogy of God's providence, as before shown, and still more from the idea of God, as above laid down, we say again: It must be so. Man must, through the religious element, have a connection with God, as by the senses with matter. He is, relative to us, the object of the soul, as much as matter is the object of the senses. As God has an

influence on passive and unconscious matter, so he must have on active and conscious man. As this action in the one case is only modified by the conditions of matter, so will it be in the other, only by the conditions of man. As no obedient animal is doomed to wander up and down, seeking rest, but finding none; so no obedient man can be left hopeless, forlorn, without a supply, without a guide.

Now it might be supposed that the spontaneous presentiment of this supply for our spiritual demands; this twofold argument from the idea of God and the analogy of his action in general, would satisfy both the spontaneous and the reflective mind, convincing them of man's general capability of a connection with God, of receiving truth, in a regular and natural way from him, by revelation, inspiration, suggestion, or by what other name we may call the joint action of the divine and human mind. Such indeed is the belief of nations in an early and simple state. It is attested by the literature, traditions, and monuments of all primitive people. They believed that God held converse with men. He spoke in the voices of nature; in signs and omens; in dreams by night; in deep, silent thoughts by day; skill, strength, wisdom, goodness, were referred to him. The highest function of men was God's gift. He made the laws of Minos, Moses, Numa, Rhadamanthus; he inspires the poet, artist, patriot; works with the righteous everywhere. Had fetichism no meaning? Was polytheism only a lie with no truth at the bottom? Prayers, sacrifices, fasts, priesthoods, show that men believed in intercourse with God. Good, simple-hearted men and women, who live lives of piety, believe it now, and never dream it is a great philo-

sophical truth, which lies in their mind. They wonder anybody should doubt it.

But yet among thinking men, who have thought just enough to distrust instinct, but not enough to see by the understanding the object which instinct discloses, especially it seems among thinking Englishmen and Americans, a general doubt prevails on this point.

The material world is before our eyes; its phenomena are obvious to the senses, and most men having active senses — which develop before the understanding — and the lower faculties of intellect also, somewhat active, get pretty clear notions about these phenomena, though not of their cause and philosophy. But as the soul is rarely so active as the senses; as the whole spiritual nature is not often so well developed as the sensual, so spiritual phenomena are little noticed; very few men have clear notions about them. Hence to many men all spiritual and religious matters are vague. "Perhaps yes and perhaps no," is all they can say.

Then again the matter is made worse, for they hear extravagant claims made in relation to spiritual things and intercourse with God. One man says, he was healed of a fever, or saved from drowning, not by the medicine, or the boatman, but by the direct interposition of God; another will have it that he has direct and miraculous illuminations, though it is plain he is still sitting in darkness. This bigot would destroy all human knowledge that there may be clean paper to receive the divine word, miraculously written thereon; that fanatic bids men trust the doctrine which is reputed of miraculous origin and even at variance with human faculties. Both the bigot and the fanatic condemn science as the "Pride of Reason," and talk boastingly of their special revelations, their new light,

the signs and wonders they have seen or heard of to attest this revelation. The sincere man of good sense is disgusted by these things, and asks if there be no pride of folly as well as reason, and no revelation of nonsense from the man's own brain, which is mistaken as an eternal truth coming winged from the godhead? He rests, therefore, in his notions of mere material things; will see nothing which he cannot see through; believe nothing he cannot handle. These material notions have already become systematized; and so far as there is any philosophy commonly accredited amongst us, it is one which grows mainly out of this sensual way of looking at things; a philosophy which logically denies the possibility of inspiration, or intercourse with God, except through a miracle that shall transcend the faculties of man.

Now on this subject of inspiration there are but three views possible. Each of these is supported by no one writer exclusively or perfectly, but by many taken in the aggregate. Let us examine each of them as it appears in recent times, with its philosophy and logical consequences. However, it is to be remembered that all conclusions which follow logically, are not to be charged on men who admit the premises.

CHAPTER VI

THE RATIONALISTIC VIEW, OR NATURALISM

This allows that the original powers of nature, as shown in the inorganic, the vegetable, and the animal world, all came from God at the first, that he is a principle, either material or spiritual, separate from the world, and independent thereof. He made the world, and all things, including man, and stamped on them certain laws, which they are to keep.* He was but transiently present and active in nature at creation; is not immanently present and active therein. He has now, nothing to do with the world but — to see it go. Here, then, is God on the one side; on the other, man and nature. But there is a great gulf fixed between them, over which there passes, neither God nor man.

This theory teaches that man, in addition to his organs of perception, has certain intellectual faculties by which he can reason from effect to cause; can discover truth, which is the statement of a fact; from a number of facts in science can discern a scientific law, the relation of thing to thing; from a number of facts in morals, can learn the relation of man to man, deduce a moral law, which shall teach the most expedient and profitable way of managing affairs. Its state-

* There is another form of *Naturalism* which denies the existence of a God separate, or separable from the universe. Since this system would annihilate all Religion, it may be called *irreligious Naturalism;* with that I have now nothing to do. Some have been called Rationalists, who deny that God is separate from the world. See above, Book I.

ment of both scientific and moral facts rests solely on experience, and never goes beyond the precedents. Still further, it allows that men can find out there is a God, by reasoning experimentally from observations in the material world, and metaphysically also, from the connection of notions in the mind. But this conclusion is only to be reached, in either case, by a process that is long, complicated, tortuous, and so difficult that but one man in some thousands has the necessary experimental knowledge, and but one in some millions, the metaphysical subtlety requisite to go through it, and become certain that there is a God. Its notion of God is this — a being who exists as the power, mind, and will that caused the universe.*

The metaphysical philosophy of this system may be briefly stated. In man, by nature, there is nothing but man; there is but one channel by which knowledge can come into man, that is sensation; perception through the senses. That is an assumption, nobody pretends it is proved. This knowledge is modified by reflection — the mind's process of ruminating upon the knowledge which sensation affords. At any given time, therefore, if we examine what is in man, we find nothing which has not first been in the senses. Now the senses converse only with finite phenomena. Reflection — what can it get out of these? The absolute? The premise does not warrant the conclusion. Something "as good as infinite?" Let us see. It makes a scientific law a mere generalization from observed facts which it can never go beyond. Its science, therefore, is in the rear of observation; we do not know thereby

* Dr. Dewey, writing in the Christian Examiner, says the proposition that there is a God *"is not a certainty."* See Examiner for Sept. 1845, p. 197, et seq.

whether the next stone shall fall to the ground or from it. All it can say of the universality of any law of science, is this, "So far as we have seen, it is so." It cannot pass from the particular to the universal. It makes a moral law the result of external experience, merely an induction from moral facts; not the affirmation of man's moral nature declaring the eternal rule of right. It learns morality by seeing what plan succeeds best in the long run. Its morality, therefore, is selfishness verified by experiment. A man in a new case, for which he can find no precedents, knows not what to do. He is never certain he is right till he gets the reward. Its moral law at present, like the statute law, is the slowly elaborated product of centuries of experience. It pretends to find out God, as a law in science, solely, by reasoning from effect to cause; from a plan to the designer. Then on what does a man's belief in God depend? On man's nature, acting spontaneously? No; for there is nothing in man, but man, and nothing comes in but sensations, which do not directly give us God. It depends on reflection, argument, that process of reasoning mentioned before. Now admitting that sensation affords sufficient premise for the conclusion, there is a difficulty in the way. The man must either depend on his own reasoning, or that of another. In the one case he may be mistaken, in an argument, so long, crooked, and difficult. It is at best an inference. The "Hypothesis of a God," as some impiously call it — may thus rest on no better argument than the hypothesis of Vortices, or Epicycles. In the other case, if we trust another man, he may be mistaken; still worse, may design to deceive the inquirer, as, we are told, the heathen sages did. Where, then, is the certain conviction of any God at all? This theory allows none.

Its "proof of the existence of God" is a proof of the possibility of a God; perhaps of his probability; surely no more.

But the case is yet worse. In any argumentation there must be no more expressed in the conclusion than is logically and confessedly implied in the premises. When finite phenomena are the only premises, whence comes the idea of infinite God? It denies that man has any idea of the absolute, infinite, perfect. Instead of this, it allows only an accumulative notion, formed from a series of conceptions of what is finite and imperfect. The little we can know of God came from reasoning about objects of sense. Its notion of God is deduced purely from empirical observation; what notion of a God can rest legitimately on that basis? Nature is finite. To infer an infinite author is false logic. We see but in part, and have not grasped up this sum of things, nor seen how seeming evil consists with real good, nor accounted for the great amount of misery, apparently unliquidated, in the world; therefore nature is imperfect to men's eyes. Why infer a perfect author from an imperfect work? Injustice and cruelty are allowed in the world. How then can its maker be relied on as just and merciful? Let there be nothing in the conclusion which is not in the premises.

This theory gives us only a finite and imperfect God, which is no God at all. He cannot be trusted out of sight; for its faith is only an inference from what is seen. Instead of a religious sentiment in man, which craves all the perfections of the godhead; reaches out after the infinite "first good, first perfect, and first fair," it gives us only a tendency to reverence or fear what is superior to ourselves, and above our comprehension; a tendency which the bat and the owl have in

common with Socrates and Fenelon. It makes a man the slave of his organization. Free-will is not possible. His highest aim is self-preservation; his greatest evil death. It denies the immortality of man, and foolishly asks "proofs" of the fact — meaning proofs palpable to the senses. Its finite God is not to be trusted, except under his bond and covenant to give us what we ask for.

It makes no difference between good and evil; expedient and inexpedient are the better words. These are to be learned only by long study and much cunning. All men have not the requisite skill to find out moral and religious doctrines, and no means of proving either in their own heart; therefore they must take the word of their appointed teachers and philosophers, who "have investigated the matter;" found there is "an expedient way" for them to follow, and a "God" to punish them if they do not follow it. In moral and religious matters the mass of men must rely on the authority of their teachers. Millions of men, who never made an astronomical observation, believe the distance between the earth and the sun is what Newton or Laplace declares it to be. Why should not men take moral and religious doctrines on the same evidence? It is true, astronomers have differed a little — some making the earth the centre, some the sun — and divines still more. But men must learn the moral law as the statute law. The state is above each man's private notions about good and evil, and controls these, as well as their passions. Man must act always from mean and selfish views, never from love of the good, the beautiful, the true.

This system would have religious forms, and ceremonies to take up the mind of the people; moral pre-

cepts, and religious creeds, "punished by authority," to keep men from unprofitable crimes; an established church, like the jail and the gallows, a piece of state-machinery. It is logical in this, for it fears that, without such a provision, the sensual nature would overlay the intellectual; the few religious ideas common men could get, would be so shadowy and uncertain, and men be so blinded by prejudice, superstition, and fancy, or so far misled by passion and ignorant selfishness, that nothing but want and anarchy would ensue. It tells men to pray. None can escape the conviction that prayer, vocal or silent, put up as a request, or felt as a sense of supplication, is natural as hunger and thirst, or tears and smiles. Even a self-styled atheist * talks of the important physiological functions of prayer. This theory makes prayer a soliloquy of the man; a thinking with the upper part of the head; a sort of moral gymnastics. Thereby we get nothing from God. He is the other side of the world. "He is a journeying, or pursuing, or peradventure he sleepeth." Prayer is useful to the worshipper as the poet's frenzy, when he apostrophizes a mountain, or the moon, and works himself into a rapture, but gets nothing from the mountain or the moon, except what he carried out.

In a word, this theory reduces the idea of God to that of an abstract cause, and excludes this cause both from man and the world. It has only a finite God, which is no God at all, for the two terms cancel each other. It has only a selfish morality, which is no morality at all, for the same reason. It reduces the soul to the aggregate functions of the flesh; providence to a law of matter; infinity to a dream; religion to priest-

* M. Comte.

craft; prayer to an apostrophe; morality to making a good bargain; conscience to cunning. It denies the possibility of any connection between God and man. Revelation and inspiration it regards as figures of speech, by which we refer to an agency purely ideal what was the result of the senses and matter acting thereon. Men calling themselves inspired, speaking in the name of God, were deceivers, or deceived. Prophets, the religious geniuses of the world, mistook their fancies for revelations; embraced a cloud instead of a goddess, and produced only misshapen dreams. Judged by this system, Jesus of Nazareth was a pure-minded fanatic, who knew no more about God than Peter Bayle and Pomponatius, but yet did the world service, by teaching the result of his own or others' experience, as revelations from God accompanied with the promise of another life, which is reckoned a pleasant delusion, useful to keep men out of crime, a clever auxiliary of the powers that be.

This system has perhaps never been held in all its parts, by any one man,* but each portion has often been defended, and all its parts go together and come unavoidably from that notion, that there is nothing in man which was not first in the senses.† The best representatives of this school were, it may be, the

* It is instructive to see the influence of this form of philosophy in the various departments of inquiry, as shown in the writings of Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Collins, Mandeville, Hartley, Hume, Priestley, Paley, Horne-Tooke, Condillac, Helvetius, Darwin, Bentham, etc. But this philosophy could never fully satisfy the English mind. So there were such men as Cudworth, Moore, Cumberland, Edwards, Wollaston, Clarke, Butler, Berkeley, Harris, Price, and more recently, Reid, Stewart, Brown, Coleridge, and Carlyle, not to mention the more mystical men like Fox and Penn, with their followers.

† See the judicious observations of Shaftesbury, eighth Letter to a Student.

French Materialists of the last century, and some of the English Deists. The latter term is applied to men of the most various character and ways of thinking. Some of them were most excellent men in all respects; men who did mankind great service by exposing the fanaticism of the superstitious, and by showing the absurdities embraced by many of the Christians. Some of them were much more religious and heavenly-minded than their opponents, and had a theology much more Christian, which called goodness by its proper name, and worshipped God in lowliness of heart, and a divine life. But the spirit of this system takes different forms in different men. It appears in the cold morality and repulsive forms of religion of Dr. Priestley, who was yet one of the best of men; in the skepticism of Hume and his followers, which has been a useful medicine to the Church; in the selfish system of Paley, far more dangerous than the dobts of Hume or the scoffs of Gibbon and Voltaire; in the coarse, vulgar materialism of Hobbes, who may be taken as one of the best representatives of the system.

It is obvious enough, that this system of naturalism is the philosophy which lies at the foundation of the popular theology in New England; that it is very little understood by the men, out of pulpits and in pulpits, who adhere to it; who, while they hold fast to the theory of the worst of the English Deists — though of only the worst; while they deny the immanence of God in matter and man, and therefore take away the possibility of natural inspiration, and cling to that system of philosophy which justifies the doubt of Hume, the selfishness of Paley, the coarse meterialism of Hobbes, — are yet ashamed of their descent, and seek to point out others of a quite different spiritual complexion, as the lineal descendents of that ancient stock.

This system has one negative merit. It can, as such, never lead to fanaticism. Those sects, or individuals, who approach most nearly to pure naturalism, have never been accused, in religious matters, of going too fast or too far. But it has a positive excellence. It lays great stress on the human mind, and cultivates the understanding to the last degree. However, its philosophy, its theology, its worship, are of the senses, and the senses alone.*

* I have not thought it necessary to refer particularly to the authors representing this system. I have rather taken pains to express their doctrine in my own words, lest individuals should be thought responsible for the sins of the system. One may read many works of divinity, and see that this philosophy lay unconsciously in the writer's mind. I do not mean to insinuate, that many persons fully and knowingly believe this doctrine, but that they are yet governed by it, under the modification treated of in the next chapter. Locke has sometimes been charged with follies of this character, but unjustly, as it seems to me, for though the fundamental principles of his philosophy, and many passages in his works, do certainly look that way, others are of a quite spiritual tendency. See King's Life of Locke, Vol. I. p. 366, et seq., and his theological writings, passim.

CHAPTER VII

THE ANTI-RATIONALISTIC VIEW, OR SUPERNATURALISM

This system differs in many respects from the other: but its philosophy is at bottom the same. It denies that by natural action there can be any thing in man which was not first in the senses; whatever transcends the senses can come to him only by a miracle. And the miracle is attended with phenomena obvious to the senses. To develop the natural side of the theory it sets God on the one side and man on the other. However it admits the immanence of God in matter, and talks very little about the laws of matter, which it thinks require revision, amendment, and even repeal, as if the nature of things changed, or God grew wiser by experiment. It does not see that if God is always the same, and immanent in nature, the laws of nature can neither change nor be changed.* It limits the power of man still further than the former theory. It denies that he can, of himself, discover the existence of God; or find out that it is better to love his brother than to hate him, to subject the passions to reason, desire to duty, rather than to subject reason to passion, duty to desire.† Man can find out all that is needed for his

* Leibnitz in a letter to the Princess of Wales, Opp. phil. ed. Erdmann; Berlin, 1840, p. 746–7, amuses himself with ridiculing this view which he ascribes to Newton and his followers, "according to them," says he, "God must wind up his watch from time to time or it would stop outright. He was not far-sighted enough to make a perpetual motion."

† Some supernaturalists admit that man by nature can find out the most important religious truths, in the way set down

animal and intellectual welfare, with no miracle; but can learn nothing that is needed for his moral and religious welfare. He can invent the steam engine, and calculate the orbit of Halley's comet; but cannot tell good from evil, nor determine that there is a God. The unnecessary is given him; the indispensable he cannot get by nature. Man, therefore, is the veriest wretch in creation. His mind forces him to inquire on religious matters, but brings him into doubt, and leaves him in the very slough of despond. He goes up and down sorrowing, seeking rest, but finding none. Nay; it goes further still, and declares that, by nature, all men's actions are sin, hateful to God.

On the other hand, it teaches that God works a miracle from time to time, and makes to men a positive revelation of moral and religious truth, which they could not otherwise gain. Its history of revelations is this: God revealed his own existence in a visible form to the first man; taught him religious and moral duties by words orally spoken. The first man communicated this knowledge to his descendants, from whom the tradition of the fact has spread over all the world. Men know there is a God, and a distinction between right and wrong, only by hearsay, as they know there was a flood in the time of Noah, or Deucalion. The first man sinned, and fell from the state of frequent communion with

before, and some admit a moral sense in man. Others deny both. A recent writer denies that he can find by the light of nature any theological truth. Natural theology is not possible. See Irons, On the whole Doctrine of Final Causes; Lond. 1836, p. 34, 129, and passim. His introductory chapter on modern deism is very curious. He has some excellent remarks, for there are two kingdoms of philosophy in him, but wishes to advance what he calls revealed religion, at the expense of the foundation of all religion. The Ottoman King never thinks himself secure on the throne till he has slain all his brothers.

God. Revelations have since become rare; exceptions in the history of men. However, as man having no connection with the infinite must soon perish, God continued to make miraculous revelations to one single people. To them he gave laws, religious and civil; made predictions, and accompanied each revelation by some miraculous sign, for without it none could distinguish the truth from a lie. Other nations received reflections of this light, which was directly imparted to the favored people. At length he made a revelation of all religious and moral truth, by means of his Son, a divine and miraculous being, both God and man, and confirmed the tidings by miracles the most surprising. As this revelation is to last forever, it has been recorded miraculously, and preserved for all coming time. The persons who received direct communication miraculously from God, are of course mediators between him and the human race.

Now to live as religious men, we must have a knowledge of religious truth; for this we must depend alone on these mediators. Without them we have no access to God. They have established a new relation between man and God. But they are mortal, and have deceased. However, their sayings are recorded by miraculous aid. A knowledge of God's will, of morality and religion, therefore, is only to be got at, by studying the documents which contain a record of their words and works, for the word of God has become the letter of scripture. We can know nothing of God, religion, or morals at first hand. God was but transiently present in a small number of the race, and has now left it altogether.

This theory forgets that a verbal revelation can never communicate a simple idea, like that of God, justice,

love, religion, more than a word can give a deaf man an idea of sound. It makes inspiration a very rare miracle, confined to one nation, and to some scores of men in that nation, who stand between us and God. We cannot pray in our own name, but in that of the mediator, who hears the prayer, and makes intercession for us. It exalts certain miraculous persons, but degrades man. In prophets and saints, in Moses and Jesus, it does not see the possibility of the race made real, but only the miraculous work of God. Our duty is not to inquire into the truth of their word. Reason is no judge of that. We must put faith in all which all of them tell us, though they contradict each other never so often. Thus it makes an antithesis between faith and knowledge, reason and revelation. It denies that common men, in the nineteenth century, can get at truth, and God, as Paul and John in the first century. It sacrifices reason, conscience, and love to the words of the miraculous men, and thus makes its mediator a tyrant, who rules over the soul by external authority, restricting reason, conscience, and love; not a brother, who acts in the soul, by waking its dormant powers, disclosing truth, and leading others by a divine life, to God, the source of light. It says the words of Jesus are true because he spoke them; not that he spoke them because true. It relies entirely on past times; does not give us the absolute religion, as it exists in man's nature, and the ideas of the Almighty, only a historical mode of worship, as lived out here or there. It says the canon of revelation is closed; God will no longer act on men as heretofore. We have come at the end of the feast; are born in the latter days and dotage of mankind, and can only get light, by raking amid the ashes of the past, and blowing its

brands, now almost extinct. It denies that God is present and active in all spirit as in all space — thus it denies that he is infinite. In the miraculous documents it gives us an objective standard, "the only infallible rule of religious faith and practice." These mediators are greater than the soul; the Bible the master of reason, conscience, and the religious sentiment. They stand in the place of God.

Men ask of this system: How do you know there is in man nothing but the product of sensation, or miraculous tradition; that he cannot approach God except by miracle; that these mediators received truth miraculously; taught all truth; nothing but the truth; that you have their words, pure and unmixed in your Scriptures; that God has no further revelation to make? The answer is:— we find it convenient to assume all this, and accordingly have banished reason from the premises, for she asked troublesome questions. We condescend to no proof of the facts. You must take our word for that. Thus the main doctrines of the theory rest on assumptions; on no-facts.

This system represents the despair of man groping after God. The religious element acts, but is crippled by a philosophy poor and sensual. Is man nothing but a combination of five senses, and a thinking machine to grind up and bolter sensations, and learn of God only by hearsay? The God of Supernaturalism is a God afar off; its religion worn-out and second-hand. We cannot meet God face to face. In one respect it is worse than naturalism; that sets great value on the faculties of man, which this depreciates and profanes. But all systems rest on a truth, or they could not be; this on a great truth, or it could not prevail widely. It admits a qualified immanence of God

in nature, and declares, also, that mankind is dependent on Him, for religious and moral truth as for all things else; has a connection with God who really guides, educates, and blesses the race, for he is transiently present therein. The doctrine of miraculous events, births, persons, deaths, and the like, this is the veil of poetry drawn over the face of fact. It has a truth not admitted by naturalism. As only a few "*thinking*" men even in fancy can be satisfied without a connection with God, so naturalism is always confined to a few reflective and cultivated persons; while the mass of men believe in the supernatural theory, at least, in the truth it covers up. Its truth is of great moment. Its vice is to make God transiently active in man, not immanent in him; restrict the divine presence and action to times, places, and persons. It overlooks the fact that if religious truth be necessary for all, then it must either have been provided for and put in the reach of all, or else there is a fault in the divine plan. Then again, if God gives a natural supply for the lower wants, it is probable, to say the least, he will not neglect the higher. Now for the religious consciousness of man, a knowledge of two great truths is indispensable: namely, a knowledge of the existence of the infinite God, and of the duty we owe to him, for a knowledge of these two is implied in all religious teaching and life. Now one of two things must be admitted, and a third is not possible: either man can discover these two things by the light of nature, or he cannot. If the latter be the case, then is he the most hopeless of all beings. Revelation of these truths is confined to a few; it is indispensably necessary to all. Accordingly the first hypothesis is generally admitted by the supernaturalists, in New England — though in spite

of their philosophy — that these two things can be discovered by the light of nature. Then if the two main points, the premises which involve the whole of morals and religion, lie within the reach of man's natural powers, how is a miracle, or the tradition of a miracle, necessary to reveal the minor doctrines involved in the universal truth? Does not the faculty to discern the greater include the faculty to discern the less? What covers an acre will cover a yard. Where then is the use of the miraculous interposition?

Neither naturalism nor supernaturalism legitimates the fact of man's religious consciousness. Both fail of satisfying the natural religious wants of the race. Each has merits and vices of its own. Neither gives for the soul's wants a supply analogous to that so bountifully provided for the wants of the body, or the mind.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NATURAL-RELIGIOUS VIEW, OR SPIRITUALISM

This theory teaches that there is a natural supply for spiritual as well as for corporeal wants; that there is a connection between God and the soul, as between light and the eye, sound and the ear, food and the palate, truth and the intellect, beauty and the imagination; that as we follow an instinctive tendency, obey the body's law, get a natural supply for its wants, attain health and strength, the body's welfare; as we keep the law of the mind, and get a supply for its wants, attain wisdom and skill, the mind's welfare,— so if, following another instinctive tendency, we keep the law of the moral and religious faculties, we get a supply for their wants, moral and religious truth, obtain peace of conscience and rest for the soul, the highest moral and religious welfare. It teaches that the world is not nearer to our bodies than God to the soul; "for in him we live and move, and have our being." As we have bodily senses to lay hold on matter and supply bodily wants, through which we obtain, naturally, all needed material things; so we have spiritual faculties to lay hold on God, and supply spiritual wants; through them we obtain all needed spiritual things. As we observe the conditions of the body, we have nature on our side; as we observe the law of the soul we have God on our side. He imparts truth to all men who observe these conditions; we have direct access to him, through reason, conscience, and the religious faculty,

just as we have direct access to nature, through the eye, the ear, or the hand. Through these channels, and by means of a law, certain, regular, and universal as gravitation, God inspires men, makes revelation of truth, for is not truth as much a phenomenon of God, as motion of matter? Therefore if God be omnipresent and omniactive, this inspiration is no miracle, but a regular mode of God's action on conscious spirit, as gravitation on unconscious matter. It is not a rare condescension of God but a universal uplifting of man. To obtain a knowledge of duty, a man is not sent away, outside of himself to ancient documents, for the only rule of faith and practice; the word, is very nigh him, even in his heart, and by this word he is to try all documents whatever. Inspiration, like God's omnipresence, is not limited to the few writers claimed by the Jews, Christians, or Mahometans, but is coëxtensive with the race. As God fills all space, so all spirit; as he influences and constrains unconscious and necessitated matter, so he inspires and helps free and conscious man.

This theory does not make God limited, partial, or capricious. It exalts man. While it honors the excellence of a religious genius, of a Moses or a Jesus, it does not pronounce their character monstrous, as the supernatural, nor fanatical, as the rationalistic theory; but natural, human, and beautiful, revealing the possibility of mankind. Prayer, whether voluntative or spontaneous, a word or a feeling, felt in gratitude or penitence, or joy, or resignation,— is not a soliloquy of the man, not a physiological function, nor an address to a deceased man; but a sally into the infinite spiritual world, whence we bring back light and truth. There are windows towards God, as towards the world.

There is no intercessor, angel, mediator between man and God; for man can speak and God hear, each for himself. He requires no advocate to plead for men, who need not pray by attorney. Each man stands close to the omnipresent God; may feel his beautiful presence, and have familiar access to the all-father; get truth at first hand from its author. Wisdom, righteousness, and love, are the spirit of God in the soul of man; wherever these are, and just in proportion to their power, there is inspiration from God. Thus God is not the author of confusion, but concord; faith, and knowledge, and revelation, and reason tell the same tale, and so legitimate and confirm one another.*

God's action on matter and on man is perhaps the same thing to him, though it appear differently modified to us. But it is plain from the nature of things, that there can be but one kind of inspiration, as of truth, faith, or love: it is the direct and intuitive perception of some truth, either of thought or of sentiment. There can be but one mode of inspiration: it is the action of the highest within the soul, the divine presence imparting light; this presence as truth, justice, holiness, love, infusing itself into the soul, giving it new life; the breathing in of the deity; the in-come of God to the soul, in the form of truth through the reason, of right through the conscience, of love and faith through the affections and religious element. Is inspiration confined to theological matters alone? Most surely not. Is Newton less inspired than Simon Peter?†

* See Jonathan Edwards' view of Inspiration, in his sermon on A divine Light imparted to the Soul, etc. Works, ed. Lond. 1840. Vol. II. p. 12, et seq., and Vol. I. p. cclxix. No. [20].

† So long as inspiration is regarded as purely miraculous,

Now if the above views be true, there seems no ground for supposing, without historical proof, there are different kinds or modes of inspiration in different persons, nations, or ages, in Minos or Moses, in Gentiles or Jews, in the first century or the last. If God be infinitely perfect, He does not change; then his modes of action are perfect and unchangeable. The laws of mind, like those of matter, remain immutable and not transcended. As God has left no age nor man destitute, by nature, of reason, conscience, affection, soul, so he leaves none destitute of inspiration. It is, therefore, the light of all our being; the background of all human faculties; the sole means by which we gain a knowledge of what is not seen and felt; the logical condition of all sensual knowledge; our high-

good sense will lessen instances of it, as far as possible; for most thinking men feel more or less repugnance at believing in any violation, on God's part, of regular laws. As spiritual things are commonly less attended to than material, the belief in miraculous inspiration remains longer in religious than secular affairs. A man would be looked on as mad, who should claim miraculous inspiration for Newton, as they have been who denied it in the case of Moses. But no candid man will doubt that, humanly speaking, it was a more difficult thing to write the Principia than the Decalogue. Man must have a nature most sadly anomalous, if, unassisted, he is able to accomplish all the triumphs of modern science, and yet cannot discover the plainest and most important principles of religion and morality without a miraculous revelation; and still more so, if being able to discover, by God's natural aid, these chief and most important principles, he needs a miraculous inspiration to disclose minor details. Science is by no means indispensable, as religion and morals. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, if it is a real advantage, follows unavoidably from the idea of God. The *Best* Being, he must *will* the best of good thing; the *Wisest,* he must devise plans for that effect; the *most Powerful,* he must bring it about. None can deny this. Does one ask another "proof of the fact?" Is he so very full of faith who cannot trust God, except he have His bond in black and white, given under oath and attested by witnesses!

way to the world of spirit. Man cannot, more than matter, exist without God. Inspiration then, like vision, must be everywhere the same thing in kind; however it differs in degree, from race to race, from man to man. The degree of inspiration must depend on two things: first, on the natural ability, the particular, intellectual, moral, and religious endowment, or genius, wherewith each man is furnished by God; and next, on the use each man makes of this endowment. In one word, it depends on the man's quantity of being, and his quantity of obedience. Now as men differ widely in their natural endowments, and much more widely in the use and development thereof, there must of course be various degrees of inspiration, from the lowest sinner up to the highest saint. All men are not by birth capable of the same degree of inspiration; and by culture and acquired character, they are still less capable of it. A man of noble intellect, of deep, rich, benevolent affections, is by his endowments capable of more than one less gifted. He that perfectly keeps the soul's law, thus fulfilling the conditions of inspiration, has more than he who keeps it imperfectly; the former must receive all his soul can contain at that stage of his growth. Thus it depends on a man's own will, in great measure, to what extent he will be inspired. The man of humble gifts at first, by faithful obedience may attain a greater degree than one of larger outfit, who neglects his talent. The apostles of the New Testament, and the true saints of all countries, are proofs of this. Inspiration, then, is the consequence of a faithful use of our faculties. Each man is its subject; God its source; truth its only test. But as truth appears in various modes to us, higher and lower, and may be superficially divided, according to our facul-

ties, into truths of the senses, of the understanding, of reason, of conscience, of the affections, and the soul, so the perception of truth in the highest mode, that of reason, morals, philanthropy, religion, is the highest inspiration. He, then, that has the most of wisdom, goodness, religion, the most of truth, in the highest modes, is the most inspired.

Now universal infallible inspiration can of course only be the attendant and result of a perfect fulfilment of all the laws of mind, of the moral, affectional and religious nature; and as each man's faculties are limited, it is not possible to men. A foolish man, as such, cannot be inspired to reveal wisdom: nor a wicked man to reveal virtue; nor an impious man to reveal religion. Unto him that hath more is given. The poet reveals poetry; the artist art; the philosopher science; the saint religion. The greater, purer, loftier, more complete the character, so is the inspiration; for he that is true to conscience, faithful to reason, obedient to religion, has not only the strength of his own virtue, wisdom, and piety, but the whole strength of omnipotence on his side; for goodness, truth, and love, as we conceive them, are not one thing in man, and another in God, but the same thing in each. Thus man partakes the divine nature, as the Platonists, Christians and Mystics call it. By these means the soul of all flows into the man; what is private, personal, peculiar, ebbs off before that mighty influx from on high. What is universal, absolute, true, speaks out of his lips, in rude, homely utterance, it may be, or in words that burn and sparkle like the lightning's fiery flash.

This inspiration reveals itself in various forms, modified by the country, character, education, peculiarity of him who receives it, just as water takes the

form and the color of the cup into which it flows, and must needs mingle with the impurities it chances to meet. Thus Minos and Moses were inspired to make laws; David to pour out his soul in pious strains, deep and sweet as an angel's psaltery; Pindar to celebrate virtuous deeds in high heroic song; John the Baptist to denounce sin; Gerson, and Luther, and Böhme, and Fenelon, and Fox, to do each his peculiar work, and stir the world's heart, deep, very deep. Plato and Newton, Milton and Isaiah, Leibnitz and Paul, Mozart, Raphael, Phidias, Praxiteles, Orpheus, receive into their various forms, the one spirit from God most high. It appears in action not less than speech. The spirit inspires Dorcas to make coats and garments for the poor, no less than Paul to preach the Gospel. As that bold man himself has said, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; . . . diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all." * In one man it may appear in the iron hardness of reasoning, which breaks through sophistry, and prejudice, the rubbish and diluvial drift of time. In another it is subdued and softened by the flame of affection; the hard iron of the man is melted and becomes a stream of persuasion, sparkling as it runs.

Inspiration does not destroy the man's freedom; that is left fetterless by obedience. It does not reduce all to one uniform standard, but Habbakuk speaks in his own way, and Hugh de St. Victor in his. The man can obey or not obey; can quench the spirit, or feed it as he will. Thus Jonah flees from his duty; Calchas will not tell the truth till out of danger; Peter dissembles and lies. Each of these men had schemes of his own, which he would carry out, God willing or

* 1 Cor. XII. 4–6, et seq.

not willing. But when the sincere man receives the truth of God into his soul, knowing it is God's truth, then it takes such a hold of him as nothing else can do. It makes the weak strong; the timid brave; men of slow tongue become full of power and persuasion. There is a new soul in the man, which takes him as it were by the hair of his head, and sets him down where the idea he wishes for demands. It takes the man away from the hall of comfort, the society of his friends; makes him austere and lonely; cruel to himself, if need be; sleepless in his vigilance, unfaltering in his toil; never resting from his work. It takes the rose out of the cheek; turns the man in on himself, and gives him more of truth. Then, in a poetic fancy, the man sees visions; has wondrous revelations; every mountain thunders; God burns in every bush; flames out in the crimson cloud; speaks in the wind; descends with every dove; is all in all. The soul, deep-wrought in its intense struggle, gives outness to its thought, and on the trees and stars, the fields, the floods, the corn ripe for the sickle, on men and women it sees its burden writ. The spirit within constrains the man. It is like wine that hath no vent. He is full of the God. While he muses the fire burns; his bosom will scarce hold his heart. He must speak or he dies, though the earth quake at his word.* Timid flesh may resist, and Moses say, I am of slow speech. What avails that? The soul says: Go and I will be with thy mouth, to quicken thy tardy tongue. Shrinking Jeremiah, effeminate and timid, recoils before the fearful work —"The flesh will quiver when the pincers tear." He says: I cannot speak. I am a child. But the great soul of all flows into him and says: Say not

* See Lucan IX. 564, et seq.

"I am a child!" for I am with thee. Gird up thy loins like a man, and speak all that I command thee. Be not afraid at men's faces, for I will make thee a defenced city, a column of steel, and walls of brass. Speak, then, against the whole land of sinners; against the kings thereof, the princes thereof, its people and its priests. They may fight against thee, but they shall not prevail; for I am with thee. Devils tempt the man, with the terror of defeat and want, with the hopes of selfish ambition. It avails nothing. A "Get-thee-behind-me, Satan," brings angels to help. Then are the man's lips touched with a live coal from the altar of truth, brought by a seraph's hand. He is baptized with the spirit of fire. His countenance is like lightning. The truth thunders from his tongue — his words eloquent as persuasion; no terror is terrible; no fear formidable. The peaceful is satisfied to be a man of strife and contention, his hand against every man, to root up and pluck down and destroy, to build with the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other. He came to bring peace, but he must set a fire, and his soul is straitened till his work be done. Elisha must leave his oxen in the furrow; Amos desert his summer fruit and his friend; and Böhme, and Bunyan, and Fox, and a thousand others, stout-hearted and God-inspired, must go forth of their errand, into the faithless world, to accept the prophet's mission, be stoned, hated, scourged, slain. Resistance is nothing to these men. Over them steel loses its power, and public opprobrium its shame; deadly things do not harm them; they count loss gain — shame glory — death triumph. These are the men who move the world. They have an eye to see its follies, a heart to weep and bleed for its sin. Filled with a soul wide as

yesterday, to-day, and forever, they pray great prayers for sinful man. The wild wail of a brother's heart runs through the saddening music of their speech. The destiny of these men is forecast in their birth. They are doomed to fall on evil times and evil tongues, come when they will come. The priest and the Levite war with the prophet and do him to death. They brand his name with infamy; cast his unburied bones into the Gehenna of popular shame; John the Baptist must leave his head in a charger; Socrates die the death; Jesus be nailed to his cross; and Justin, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and millions of hearts stout as these and as full of God, must mix their last prayers, their admonition, and farewell blessing, with the crackling snap of fagots, the hiss of quivering flesh, the impotent tears of wife and child, and the mad roar of the exulting crowd. Every path where mortal feet now tread secure, has been beaten out of the hard flint by prophets and holy men, who went before us, with bare and bleeding feet, to smooth the way for our reluctant tread. It is the blood of prophets that softens the Alpine rock. Their bones are scattered in all the high places of mankind. But God lays his burdens on no vulgar men. He never leaves their souls a prey. He paints Elysium on their dungeon wall. In the populous chamber of their heart, the light of faith shines bright and never dies. For such as are on the side of God there is no cause to fear.

The influence of God in nature, in its mechanical, vital, or instinctive action, is beautiful. The shapely trees; the leaves that clothe them in loveliness; the corn and the cattle; the dew and the flowers; the bird, the insect, moss and stone, fire and water, and earth and air; the clear blue sky that folds the world in its

soft embrace; the light which rides on swift pinions, enchanting all it touches, reposing harmless on an infant's eyelid, after its long passage from the other side of the universe,— all these are noble and beautiful; they admonish while they delight us, these silent counsellors and sovereign aids. But the inspiration of God in man, when faithfully obeyed, is nobler and far more beautiful. It is not the passive elegance of unconscious things which we see resulting from man's voluntary obedience. That might well charm us in nature; in man we look for more. Here the beauty is intellectual, the beauty of thought which comprehends the world and understands its laws; it is moral, the beauty of virtue, which overcomes the world and lives by its own laws; it is religious and affectional, the beauty of holiness and love, which rises above the world and lives by the law of the spirit of life. A single good man, at one with God, makes the morning and evening sun seem little and very low. It is a higher mode of the divine power that appears in him, self-conscious and self-restrained.

Now this it seems is the only kind of inspiration which is possible. It is coëxtensive with the faithful use of man's natural powers. Men may call it miraculous, but nothing is more natural; or they may say, it is entirely human, for it is the result of man's use of his faculties; but what is more divine than wisdom, justice, benevolence, piety? Are not these the points in which man and God conjoin? If He is present and active in spirit — such must be the perfect result of the action. No doubt there is a mystery in it, as in sensation, in all the functions of man. But what then? As a good man has said: "God worketh with us both to will and to do." Mind, conscience, the af-

fections, and the soul mediate between us and God, as the senses between us and matter. Is one more surprising than the other? Is the one to be condemned as spiritual mysticism or pantheism? Then so is the other as material mysticism or pantheism. Alas, we know but in part; our knowledge is circumscribed by our ignorance.

Now it is the belief of all primitive nations that God inspires the wise, the good, the holy.* Yes, that he works with man in every noble work. No doubt their poor conceptions of God degraded the doctrine and ascribed to the deity what came from their disobedience of his law.

The wisest and holiest men have spoken in the name of God. Minos, Moses, Zoroaster, Confucius, Zaleucus, Numa, Mahomet, profess to have received their doctrine straightway from Him. The sacred persons of all nations, from the Druid to the Pope, refer back to his direct inspiration. From this source the Sibylline oracles, the responses at Delphi, the sacred books of all nations, the Vedas and the Bible, alike claim to proceed. Pagans tell us no man was ever great without a divine afflatus falling upon him.† Much falsity was mingled with the true doctrine, for that was imperfectly understood, and violence, and folly, and lies

* On this doctrine see Sonntag, Doctrina Inspirationis, etc.; 1803, § 1, et seq. and the authors he cites. De Wette, Dogmatik, § 85–96, and §143–148, gives the Old Testament doctrine of Inspiration. See also Hase, Hutterus redivivus, § 41, Dogmatik, §8. Bretschneider, Dogmatik, Vol. I. § 14, et seq., and Baumgarten-Crusius, Dogmengeschichte, Vol. II. p. 775, et seq. Much useful matter has been collected by these writers, and by Münscher, Bauer, Von Cölln and Strauss, but a special history of the doctrine is still a desideratum.

† See the opinions of the ancients in the classic passages, Cicero de Nat. Deorum, II. 66. Orat. pro. Arch. c. 8. Xeno-

were thus ascribed to God. Still the popular belief shows that the human mind turns naturally in this direction. Each prophet, false or true, in Palestine, Nubia, India, Greece, spoke in the name of God. In this name the apostles of Christ and of Mahomet, the Catholic and the Protestant, went to their work.* A good man feels that justice, goodness, truth, are immutable, not dependent on himself; that certain convictions come by a law over which he has no control. There they stand, he cannot alter though he may refuse to obey them. Some have considered themselves bare tools in the hand of God; they did and said they knew not what, thus charging their follies and sins on God most high. Others, going to a greater degree of insanity, have confounded God with themselves, declaring that they were God. But even if likeness were perfect, it is not identity. Yet a ray from the primal light falls on man. No doubt there have been men of a high degree of inspiration, in all countries; the founders of the various religions of the world. But they have been limited in their gifts, and their use of them. The doctrine they taught had somewhat national, tem-

phon Memorab. I. 1. Seneca, Epp. XLI. See many passages collected in Sonntag. See also Barclay's Apology for the Quakers, Prop. I.–III. XI. Sewell's History of the Quakers, B. IX. X. XI. XII. and p. 693 and George Fox's Journal, passim.

* The history of the formation of the ecclesiastical doctrine of inspiration, which is the Supernatural View, is curious. It did not assume its most exclusive shape in the early teachers. In John of Damascus it appears in its vigor. In Abelard and Peter Lombard, it is more mild and liberal. Since the Reformation, it has been violently attacked. Luther himself is fluctuating in his opinions. As men's eyes opened they would separate falsehood from truth. The writings of the English deists had a great influence in this matter. See Walch's Religions-Streitigkeiten, Vol. V. ch. VII. Strauss also, Vol. I. § 14, et seq., gives a brief and compendious account of attacks on this doctrine.

poral, even personal, in it, and so was not the absolute religion. No man is so great as human nature, nor can one finite being feed forever all his brethren. So their doctrines were limited in extent and duration.

Now this inspiration is limited to no sect, age, or nation. It is wide as the world, and common as God. It is not given to a few men, in the infancy of mankind, to monopolize inspiration and bar God out of the soul. You and I are not born in the dotage and decay of the world. The stars are beautiful as in their prime; "the most ancient Heavens are fresh and strong!" the bird merry as ever at its clear heart. God is still everywhere in nature, at the line, the pole, in a mountain or a moss. Wherever a heart beats with love; where Faith and Reason utter their oracles there also is God, as formerly in the heart of seers and phrophets. Neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem, nor the soil that Jesus blessed, so holy as the good man's heart; nothing so full of God. This inspiration is not given to the learned alone, not to the great and wise, but to every faithful child of God. The world is close to the body: God closer to the soul, not only without but within, for the all-pervading current flows into each. The clear sky bends over each man, little or great; let him uncover his head, there is nothing between him and infinite space. So the ocean of God encircles all men; uncover the soul of its senuality, selfishness, sin, there is nothing between it and God, who flows into the man, as light into the air. Certain as the open eye drinks in the light, do the pure in heart see God, and he that lives truly feels him as a presence not to be put by.*

* Such as like to settle questions by authority, will see that

But this is a doctrine of experience as much as of abstract reasoning. Every man who has ever prayed — prayed with the mind, prayed with the heart greatly and strong, knows the truth of this doctrine, welcomed by pious souls. There are hours, and they come to all men, when the hand of destiny seems heavy upon us; when the thought of time misspent; the pang of affection misplaced or ill-requited; the experience of man's worse nature and the sense of our own degradation, come over us. In the outward and inward trials, we know not which way to turn. The heart faints and is ready to perish. Then in the deep silence of the soul; when the man turns inward to God, light, comfort, peace dawn on him. His troubles — they are but a dewdrop on his sandal. His enmities or jealousies, hopes, fears, honors, disgraces, all the undeserved mishaps of life, are lost to the view; diminished, and then hid in the mists of the valley he has left behind and below him. Resolution comes over him with its vigorous wing; truth is clear as noon; the soul in faith rushes to its God. The mystery is at an end.

It is no vulgar superstition to say men are inspired in such times. They are the seed-time of life. Then we live whole years through in a few moments, and afterwards, as we journey on in life, cold and dusty, and travel-worn and faint, we look to that moment as a point of light; the remembrance of it comes over us like the music of our home heard in a distant land. Like Elisha in the fable, we go long years in the strength thereof. It travels with us, a great wakening

this is the doctrine of the more spiritual writers of the Old and New Testaments, especially of John and Paul. It seems to me this was the doctrine of Jesus himself.

light; a pillar of fire in the darkness, to guide us through the lonely pilgrimage of life. These hours of inspiration, like the flower of the aloe-tree, may be rare, but are yet the celestial blossoming of man; the result of the past, the prophecy of the future. They are not numerous to any man. Happy is he that has ten such in a year, yes, in a lifetime.

Now to many men, who have but once felt this — when heaven lay about them, in their infancy, before the world was too much with them, and they laid waste their powers, getting and spending,— when they look back upon it, across the dreary gulf, where honor, virtue, religion, have made shipwreck and perished with their youth, it seems visionary, a shadow, dream-like, unreal. They count it a phantom of their inexperience; the vision of a child's fancy, raw and unused to the world. Now they are wiser. They cease to believe in inspiration. They can only credit the saying of the priests, that long ago there were inspired men; but none now; that you and I must bow our faces to the dust, groping like the blind-worm and the beetle; not turn our eyes to the broad, free heaven; that we cannot walk by the great central and celestial light which God made to guide all who come into the world, but only by the farthing-candle of tradition, poor and flickering light which we get of the priest, which casts strange and fearful shadows around us as we walk, that "leads to bewilder and dazzles to blind." Alas for us if this be all!

But can it be so? Has infinity laid aside its omnipresence, retreating to some little corner of space? No. The grass grows as green; the birds chirp as gaily; the sun shines as warm; the moon and the stars walk in their pure beauty, sublime as before; morning and

evening have lost none of their loveliness; not a jewel has fallen from the diadem of night. God is still there; ever present in matter, else it were not; else the serpent of fate would coil him about the all of things; would crush it in his remorseless grasp, and the hour of ruin strike creation's knell.

Can it be then, as so many tell us, that God, transcending time and space, immanent in matter, has forsaken man; retreated from the Shekinah in the holy of holies, to the court of the Gentiles; that now he will stretch forth no aid, but leave his tottering child to wander on, amid the palpable obscure, eyeless and fatherless, without a path, with no guide but his feeble brother's words and works; groping after God if haply he may find him; and learning, at last, that he is but a God afar off, to be approached only by mediators and attorneys, not face to face as before? Can it be that thought shall fly through the heaven, his pinion glittering in the ray of every star, burnished by a million suns, and then come drooping back, with ruffled plume and flagging wing, and eye which once looked undazzled on the sun; now spiritless and cold — come back to tell us God is no Father; that he veils his face and will not look upon his child; his erring child! No more can this be true. Conscience is still God-with-us; a prayer is deep as ever of old; reason as true; religion as blest. Faith still remains the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Love is yet mighty to cast out fear. The soul still searches the deeps of God; the pure in heart see him. The substance of the infinite is not yet exhausted, nor the well of life drunk dry. The Father is near us as ever, else reason were a traitor, morality a hollow form, religion a mockery, and love a hideous lie. Now, as

in the days of Adam, Moses, Jesus, he that is faithful to reason, conscience, heart and soul, will, through them, receive inspiration to guide him through all his prilgrimage.

BOOK III

"Where there is a great deal of smoke and no clear flame, it argueth much moisture in the matter, and yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and therefore dubious questioning is a much better evidence, than that senseless deadness which most men take for believing. Men may know nothing in sciences have no doubts." LEIGHTON, cited by COLERIDGE, *Aids to Reflection,* American edition, 1829, p. 64.

"He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own Sect or Church, better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.'" COLERIDGE, *ubi. sup.* p. 64–65.

"While everybody wishes to believe rather than examine and decide, a just judgment is never passed upon a matter of the greatest importance; our opinion thereof is taken on trust. The error of our fathers which has fallen into our hands whirls us us round and drives us headlong. We are ruined by the example of others. We shall be healed if we separate from the rabble. Now the people, in hostility with reason, stand up as the defence of what is their own mischief." SENECA, *De Vita beata,* Ch. I., a free translation.

BOOK III

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT TO JESUS OF NAZARETH, OR A DISCOURSE OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION AND THE METHOD OF INQUIRY

It was said before, that religion, like love, is always the same thing in kind, though both are necessarily modified by other emotions combining therewith, and by the conception of the object to which the emotion is directed. Thus love is modified as it chances to coexist with weakness or strength, folly or wisdom, selfishness or morality,— qualities in the subject who loves. By these qualities the degree of love is determined. It is modified also by the qualities of the object; as love is directed towards a child, a wife, or a friend. Hence come the different modifications of religion as it coexists with faith or fear, wisdom or ignorance, love or hate in the worshipping subject, and again as the object of worship, is conceived to be one being, or many beings, or all being; as it is conceived of as the absolutely perfect: or represented as finite, cruel, capricious, and unlovely. The only perfect form of religion is produced by all the powers of a man's nature, acting harmoniously together. All manifestations of religion proceed from the religious element in

man, and are, more or less, imperfect representations of that element, as its action is more or less impeded or promoted by various causes.

If this be so, it follows that the religious element or faculty in man bears the same relation to each and all particular forms and teachers of religion, that reason bears to each and all particular systems or teachers of philosophy. That is, as no one teacher or system of philosophy, nor all teachers and systems taken together have exhausted reason, which is the groundwork and standard-measure of them all, and is represented more or less partially in each of them, and therefore as new teachers and new systems of philosophy are always possible and necessary until a system is discovered which embraces all the facts of science, sets forth and legitimates all the laws of nature, and thus represents the absolute science, which is implied in the facts of nature, or the ideas of God; so no one teacher or form of religion, nor all teachers and forms put together, have exhausted the religious faculty, which is the groundwork and standard-measure of them all, and is represented more or less partially in each, and so new teachers and new forms of religion are always possible and necessary, until a form is discovered, which embraces all the facts of man's moral and religious nature, sets forth and legitimates all the laws thereof, and thus represents the absolute religion, as it is implied in the facts of man's nature, or the ideas of God. As no system or teacher of philosophy is greater than reason, and competent to give laws to nature, but at the utmost is only coördinate with reason, and competent to discover and announce the laws of nature previously existing; so no form or teacher of religion can be greater than the religious

element, and competent to give laws to man, but at the utmost is only coördinate with the religious element, and competent to discover and announce the laws of man previously existing. In one word, absolute science answers exactly to reason, and is what reason demands; absolute religion answers exactly to the religious element, and is what the religious element demands. Therefore until philosophy and religion attain the absolute, each form or teacher of either is subject to be modified or supplanted by any man who has a truth not embraced by the philosophy or religion at that time extant. However, there are certain primary truths of science and religion, which alone render the two possible, and which are possessed with more or less of a distinct understading by all teachers of the two, and attain greater prominence with some. Though a system may have many faults accidently connected with it; though others may point out the faults and develop the system still further, yet the first principles remain. Thus in science, the maxims of geometry, in morals the first truths thereof, must reappear in all the systems.

Now to make a special application of these general remarks: Christianity can be no greater than the religious faculty, though it may be less, as the water can of itself rise no higher in the pipe than in the fountain, though if the pipe be defective it may fail of its former height. Religion is the universal term; absolute religion and morality its highest expression; Christianity is a particular form under this universal term; one form of religion among many others. It is either absolute religion and morality, or it is less; greater it cannot be, as there is no greater. Christianity then is a form of religion. As it is actual, it must have been re-

vealed; if it is true it must be natural. It is therefore to be examined and judged of as other forms of religion, by reason and the religious element. It is true or false; perfect or imperfect.

The question then reduces itself to this. Is Christianity the absolute religion? To answer the question we must know, first, what Christianity is; secondly, what absolute religion is. If Christianity is not the absolute, we must of course look for a more perfect manifestation of religion, just as we look for improvements in science till philosophy becomes absolute. But if Christianity be this, or involve it, and nothing contradicts or impedes this, then we can expect nothing higher in religion, for there is no higher; but have only to understand this, and develop its principals; applying it to life, in order to attain perfect religious welfare.

To ascertain what is absolute religion, is no difficult matter; for religion is not an external thing, like astronomy, to be learned by long observation, and the perfection of scientific instruments and algebraic processes; but something above all, inward and natural to man. As it was said before, absolute religion is perfect obedience to the law of God; the service of God by the normal use, development, and discipline of every limb of the body, every faculty of the spirit; perfect love towards God and man, exhibited in a life allowing and demanding a harmonious action of all man's faculties, so far as they act at all.

But to answer the historical question: Did Jesus of Nazareth teach absolute religion? is a matter vastly more difficult, which it requires learning, critical skill, and no little painstaking to make out. To answer the first question, What is Christianity? is a very difficult

thing. No two men seem agreed about it; the wickedest of wars have been fought to settle it. To answer the query, are we to take what is popularly called Christianity? No Protestant thinks the Christianity of the Catholic Church is absolute religion; nor will the Catholic think better of the Protestant faith. A pious man, free from bigotry, and capable of judging, would surely make very short work of the question, and decide that Christianity, as popularly taught by both these churches, taken together, is not absolute religion.

But we must look deeper than Protestantism and popery. We must distinguish Christianity from the popular conceptions of Christianity; from its proof and its form. To do this, we must go back, historically, to the fountainhead, the words of Jesus. We must then take these words in the abstract, separate from any church; apart from all authority, real or pretended; without respect of any application thereof to life, that was made by its founder or others. If all churches have believed it, if miracles have been wrought in its favor, if its application have been good in this or that case, it does not follow that Christianity is absolute and final. The church has been notoriously mistaken on many points. Miracles are claimed for Judaism, Mahometanism, and idolatry: each heresy is thought by its followers to work well. We must look away from all these considerations. If Jesus of Nazareth lived out his idea, and was the greatest of saints, it does not follow that his idea was absolute, and therefore final. If he did not perfectly live it out, the reverse does not follow. The good life of a teacher proves nothing of any speculative doctrine he entertains, either in morals or mathematics. A man would be thought insane who should say Euclid's demonstra-

tion of the forty-seventh problem was true, because Euclid lived a good life, and raised men from the dead; or that it was false, because he lived a bad life, and murdered his mother. If Christianity be the absolute, it is independent of all circumstances; eternally true, as much before its declaration as after it is brought to light and applied to life.* Before its revelation it was active, but unknown; afterwards known to be active. To illustrate this point: the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. This is eternally true; and applies to all triangles that were, are, or are to be conceived of. It was just as true before any one discovered and declared it, as afterwards. Its truth depends not on the fact that Thales or Stilpo demonstrates the theorem, nor on the authority of him who asserts it. Its truth exists in the very nature of things, or, to use other words, in the ideas of God. It was just the same before creation as afterwards. Other things remaining the same, even Omnipotence cannot make these three angles to be more or less than two right angles, for Infinite power of course excludes contradictions.

Now here are two things: first, religion as it exists in the facts of man's nature, and secondly, religion as taught by Jesus of Nazareth. The first must be eternally true. But it follows from no premise that the second is eternally true. He may have taught absolute religion, or an imperfect form; he may have omitted what was essential, or have added what was national, temporal, personal. In either case Christianity is not

* See this point touched in a pamphlet entitled "The Previous Question between Mr. Andrews Norton and his Alumni, moved and handled, by Levi Blodgett." [By Theodore Parker himself.] Boston, 1840.

the absolute religion. But if it have none of these faults, and really conforms with this ideal standard, or involves this, and if nothing therein contradicts it, then Christianity is the absolute religion; eternally true, before revelation, after revelation; the law God made for man, and wrote in his nature.

Then again if the character of Jesus was not a perfect manifestation of this perfect religion which he taught or implied; if his application of it to life was limited by his position, his youth, his indiscretion, fanaticism, prejudice, ignorance, selfishness, as some have contended, it does not make the religion he taught any the less perfect in itself; if true at all it is eternally true. If Christianity be true at all, it would be just as true if Herod or Catiline had taught it. Therefore if the intellectual character of Jesus had never so many defects, if he entertained false notions about himself, his office, ministry, destination; respecting ancient history and Jewish literature; the existence and agency of devils, and in general, respecting things past, present, and to come; if he entertained the absurdest notions at the same time with his pure doctrine; nay, if he had never so many moral deficiencies, if he denounced his enemies, and was frighted at danger, and fled away from death, or had even recanted his most vigorous statements, still his religious doctrine would remain unaffected by all of these circumstances. To make this point clear by recurring to a former illustration, a philosopher may show that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, yet lead an immoral life, believe in witches, devils, the philopher's stone, and imputed righteousness. His absurd belief and wicked life do not affect the truth of his theorem.

Now then to determine what Christianity is, we must

remove all those extraneous matters relating to the person, character, and authority of him who first taught it; we must now separate it from all applications thereof which have been made to life; must view it by itself, as doctrine, as life; and measure it by this ideal standard of absolute religion. After we have determined this question, we may then judge of the applications of Christianity to life; of the character of its revealer, and try both by the standard he offers.

CHAPTER II

REMOVAL OF SOME DIFFICULTIES. CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN RECORDS

The method of acquiring a knowledge of absolute religion is plain and easy, but to get a knowledge of the doctrine taught by any teacher of ancient times is more difficult. This, however, may be said in general, that there are three sources of knowledge accessible to men, two of these are direct, and one indirect. First, perception through the senses; by this we only get an acquaintance with material things and their properties. Second, intuition through intellect, conscience, the religious faculty, by which we get an acquaintance with spiritual things, which are not objects of sense. Third, reflection, a mental process, by which we unfold what is contained or implied or suggested in perceptions or intuitions. Then as a secondary, but not ultimate source, there is testimony, by which we learn what others have found out, through perception, intuition, or reflection. Now thoughts or objects of thought may be classified in reference to their sources. The truths of absolute religion are not matters of sense, it is plain. If objects of reflection or intuition, they must be obvious to all who have the intuitive or reflective faculty, and will use it. They therefore are matters of direct personal experience; not so a knowledge of any given historical form of religion. As it has been before said, the great truths of religion are matters of spontaneous intuition, and then of voluntary reflection, God helping the faithful, who use their faculties justly. There-

fore, theoretically, each may depend on his own intuitions, and reflections. The aid, the counsel, the example of good men help us to the truth. The wise and the pious are the educators whom God appoints for the race. By their superior gift, they help feebler men to understand, what else the latter might never have reached. The same rule holds good in both philosophy and religion; the weak need the help of the strong; youth of experience; the faithless of the faithful. Even the experience of wicked men is an element of human progression, a warning light. The works and words of the saint help the sinner to the source of truth. This is the office of prophets and apostles.

In historical questions, respecting events that took place out of the sphere of our observation, we must depend on the testimony of others who report what they have seen and heard, felt or thought. To determine what Jesus taught, we must depend on the testimony of the evangelists, who profess to relate his works and words, and the Apostles, who reduced his thought to organization and applied it to life. To speak of the four evangelists — admitting, for the sake of the argument, that we have their evidence, that the books in our hands come really from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and that they bore the relation to Jesus which they claim; the question comes: — Are they competent to testify in the case? Can we trust them to give us the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Admitting they were honest, yet if they were but men, there must be limitations to the accuracy of their testimony. They must omit many things that Jesus said and did, perhaps both actions and words important in estimating his doctrines. They can express only so much of their teacher's opinions as they know; to do this they might

perhaps modify, at least color, the doctrine in their own mind. They might sometimes misunderstand what they heard; mistake a general for a particular statement, and the reverse; a new doctrine of the teacher might accidently coincide in part with an old doctrine, and he be supposed to teach what he did not teach; a parable or an action might be misunderstood; a quotation misapplied or forgotten, and another put in its place; a general prediction, wish, or hope referred to a specific time, or event, when it had no such reference. He may have merely allowed things which he was afterwards supposed to have commanded. The writers might unconsciously exaggerate or diminish the fact; they might get intelligence at second-hand, from hearsay and popular rumor. Their national, sectarian, personal prejudices must color their narrative. They might confound their own notions with his, and represent them as teaching what he did not teach. They might not separate fact from fancy. Their love of the marvellous might lead them astray. If they believed in miracles they would easily incline to ascribe prodigious things to their teacher. Had they a faith in ghosts and devils, they would naturally interpret his words in favor of their own notions, rather than in opposition thereto. If the writers were ignorant men; if they wrote in one language and he spoke in another; yet more, if they wrote at some distance of time from the events, and were not skilled in sifting rumors and separating fact from fiction, the difficulty becomes still greater.

These defects are common, more or less, to all historical testimony. In the case of the evangelists, they constitute a very serious difficulty. We know the character of the writers only from themselves; they relate

much from hearsay; they continually mingle their own personal prejudices in their work; their testimony was not reduced to writing, so far as we know, till long after the event; we see that they were often mistaken, and did not always understand the words or actions of their teacher; that they contradict one another, and even themselves; that they mingle with their story puerile notions and tales which it is charitable to call absurd; that they do not write for a purely historical purpose, relating facts as they were, but with a doctrinal, or controversial aim. Such testimony could not be received if found in Valerius Maximus and Livy, or offered in a court of justice when only a few dollars were at stake, without great caution.

Now the difficulty in this case is enormous. It has been felt from an early age. To get rid of the evil, it has been tought, and even believed, that the evangelists and Apostles were miraculously inspired to such a degree that they could commit no mistake of any kind in this matter, and had none of the defects above hinted at. The assumption is purely gratuitous: there is not a fact on which to base it. The writers themselves never claim it. From the doctrine of inspiration as before laid down, it appears that such infallibility is not possible; from an examination of the facts of the case, it appears that it was not actual; the evangelists differ widely from the Apostles; the synoptics * give us in Jesus a very different being from the Christ whom John describes, and all four make such contradictory statements on some points, as to show they were by no means infallibly inspired; for in that case not only the smallest contradiction would have been impossible, but without concert, they must all have written exactly the

* Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

same thing, yet John omits the most surprising facts, the synoptics the most surprising doctrines.

What has been said is sufficient to show that we must proceed with great caution in accepting the statements of the Gospels. The most careless observer discovers inconsistencies, absurd narrations; finds actions attributed to Jesus, and words put in his mouth, which are directly at variance with his great principles, and the general tone of his character. Still there must have been a foundation of fact for such a superstructure; a great spirit to have commenced such a movement as the Christian; a great doctrine to have accomplished this, the most profound and wondrous revolution in human affairs. We must conclude that these writers would describe the main features of his life, and set down the great principles of his doctrine, its most salient points, and his most memorable sayings, such as were poured out in the highest moments of inspiration. If the teacher were true, these sayings would involve all the rest of his doctrine, which any man of simple character, religious heart, and mind free from prejudice, could unfold and develop still further. The condition and nature of the Christian records will not allow us to go further than this, and be curious in particulars. Their legendary and mythical character does not warrant full confidence in their narrative. There are certain main features of doctrine in which the evangelists and the apostles all agree, though they differ in most other points.*

* The character of the record is such that I see not how any stress can be laid on each particular action attributed to Jesus. That *he lived a divine life, suffered a violent death, taught and lived a most true and beautiful religion,* this seems the great fact about which a mass of truth and error has been collected. That he should gather disciples, be opposed by the Priests and

Pharisees, have controversies with them — this lay in the nature of things. His loftiest sayings seem to me the most likely to be genuine. The great stress laid on the *Person of Jesus* by his followers, shows what the person must have been. They put the Person before the thing, the fact above the Idea. But it is not about vulgar men that such mythical stories are told. See Paulus, Leben Jesu; 1828. Furness, Jesus and his Biographers. Strauss, Leben Jesu; 4th ed. 1840. English Tr. of Strauss; 1846. Hase, Leben Jesu; 3d ed. 1840. Theile, Zur Biographie Jesu; 1837. Weisse, Evangelische Geschichte; 1838. Gfrörer, Urchristenthum, etc.; 1836. Hennel, Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity; Lond. 1838. Harwood, German Anti-supernaturalism; Lond. 1840. See the voluminous replies to Strauss by Tholuck, Neander, Ebrard, Lange, Harless, etc. etc. See the valuable paper of Dr. Kling on recent Apologetic Literature of the N. T. in Stud. und Krit. for Oct. 1846, p. 953, et seq. Norton, ubi sup. Vol. II. [appendix] p. cliv., considers it an "*unquestionable fact, that the words of our Saviour are not always reported with perfect correctness.*" See too p. CLXII. CXCIII. and Vol. I. p. LIX. LXI., et seq.

See the recent works of Ewald, F. C. Baur, Köstlin, Schwegler, Zeller, Hilgenfeld, Anger, Lekebusch, Luthardt, Meyer, Lechler, Hase, Ritschl, Volckmar, and Norton, on matters pertaining to this subject. Zeller's Theologische Jahrbücher (Tüb. 1842, et seq.), and Ewald's Jahrbücher der Biblischen Wissenschaft (Gött. 1849, et seq.), abound in valuable materials. The new edition of the Clementine Homilies (Dressell, Gott. 1853), containing matter not published before, and the various books of Bunsen, Baur, Petermann, Cureton, and others, relating to the Ignatian writings, and the work ascribed to Hippolytus, with the controversial writings thereon, all throw light on the subjects of this chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES OF JESUS

It is quite plain to all impartial students, that Jesus of Nazareth did not teach that complicated system of theological doctrines now called "Christianity:" that is the growth of the ages after him. But yet it is not easy, or perhaps possible, to determine what doctrines he taught on all important matters. For when we turn away from the sects of the Christian church, we find it difficult to obtain the exact words of Jesus himself.

There are two collections of ancient documents which relate to his life and teachings — the canonical, and the apocryphal gospels. The two agree in their common reverence for Jesus, and their mythological treatment of his life, differing only in degree not kind. Neither collection consists of simple historical documents. The apocryphal gospels are of small value for our present purpose, though highly important monuments of the age when such weeds grew out of the soil deeply ploughed by revolution: they are a wild growth of fancy and religious zeal, yet bear doubtless some historic flowers.*

Of the canonical gospels, after impartial study, we

* See them in the collections of Fabricius, Codex Apocryphus, N. T. 3 vols. 8vo.; Hamb. 1719. Thilo, Codex Apoc. N. T. vol. I.; Lips. 1832. Tischendorf, De Evang. Apoc. Origine et Usu; Hag. Com. 1851. Evang. Apoc.; Lips. 1853. Acta Apostol. Apoc.; *ib.* 1851. See also Hoffman, Das Leben Jesu nach den Apocryphen; Leip. 1851. And see who will, Gesch. des Rabbi Jeschua Ben Josef hanootsri; Altona, 1853. See Fabricius, Codex Pseudepig. V. T. 2 vol. 8vo.; Hamb. 1724.

must reject the fourth, as of scarcely any historical value. It appears to have been written more than a hundred years after the birth of Jesus, by an unknown author, who had a controversial and dogmatic purpose in view, not writing to report facts as they were; so he invents actions and doctrines to suit his aim, and ascribes them to Jesus with no authority for so doing. Yet this gospel, ascribed to John, one of the sons of thunder who appears in actual history, is full of deep religious feeling and thought — in this its value consists, not at all in its report of matters-of-fact.

We come to the synoptics; it is by no means clear when they were written, by whom, or with what documentary materials of history: most conflicting results are rested in by different scholars. Fact and fiction are mingled together in all these three gospels as in the apocryphal. Calling them by the names of their alleged authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke, the first seems to be the oldest of all; Luke appears to come next in order; while Mark mediates between the two. But some critics place Mark before Luke in time.

These three follow the same general tradition respecting the life, actions, and doctrines of Jesus, wherein they differ widely and irreconcilably from John. But the individual differences between the accounts of Matthew and Luke are equally remarkable and irreconcilable. In Matthew Jesus forbids his disciples to visit the Gentiles or the Samaritans, while in Luke he does miracles in Samaria; and the model of Christian excellence was found in that despised land. Luke relates the story of the Good Samaritan, and the Prodigal Son — both probably founded on facts well known at the time — which Matthew fails to report, and which Mark also neglects to copy into his compro-

mising gospel. If these two grand lessons of religion came from Jesus, as there seems no reason to doubt, then what can be said for the historic fairness, or the competence, of the two biographers who omit such important facts? Either that they were grossly ignorant of his doctrines, or else culpably unjust. If Luke invented these noble passages, then the blame rests on him for violating the truth of history by putting their beauty and sublimity upon one who had no claim thereto.

These facts show the difficulty of reconstructing the doctrines of Jesus; for if one gospel be taken as the historic standard, then much of the others must be thrown away. The results attained will depend on the subjective peculiarities of the inquirer, and so have the uncertainty of mere opinion, not the stability of historic knowledge. Even Matthew presents us with passages so inconsistent that the fragmentary character of this old gospel becomes clear to the careful scholar.*

Jesus, a young man full of genius for religion, seems to have begun his public career with the narrow aim of reforming Judaism. He would put all human piety and morality into the venerable forms of Jewish tradition. He came not to destroy but to fulfil the Mosaic law; that was eternal;— his followers were to observe and teach all the customs of the scribes and Pharisees; the sick man on recovery must offer the Levitical sacrifice. Like John the Baptist he preaches the coming of the Messiah, and the kingdom of Heaven. He would not labor for mankind but only for the children of Israel — for it is not meet to give

* Hilgenfeld tries to make out *two* main documents which form the bulk of this Gospel, p. 106, *et seq.*

the dogs the children's bread. But as he went on he found his new wine of piety and humanity burst the old wine-skins of Judaism; the old garments which scribes and Pharisees had inherited from dead prophets could not be patched with new philanthropy, and the nation be thereby clothed withal. He gradually breaks with Judaism, neglects the ceremonial fast, violates the Sabbath, speaks evil of the clerical dignities — they are covered pits in the highway, whereinto men fall and perish. He claims himself to be the Messiah; John the Baptist was the Elias who was to come and make ready. He had political plans that lie there indistinctly seen through the mythic cloud which wraps the whole. He reaches beyond Judea to Samaria at least, perhaps to other nations, and develops his religious scheme more freely than at first.

Religion is no longer fettered by conventional restraint; it is love to God, love to man: on this hang all the law and the prophets. There must be no revenge, but continual forgiveness, seventy times seven. In the next stage of life a man's eternal condition depends wholly on his natural morality and humanity in this.* His commands and requisitions related to moral conduct, not belief or liturgical ceremonies; God preferring goodness to sacramental forms.† He puts the substance of religion before its accidents, and utters magnificent beautitudes of piety and humanity.

But he does not appear to have been conscious of the infinite perfection of God, for though he calls him our Father, and insists on absolute love for God, which certainly seems to imply a feeling of his perfection, yet he considers God so imperfect as to damn the ma-

* Math. XXII. 34–40, XXV. 14–30, 34–46, et al. and parallels.
† Math. IX. 13, XXIII. 23, et passim.

jority of men to eternal torment.* Beside God he places a devil absolutely evil, the adversary of God and enemy of man. Hell is eternal, and the wide road thereto is travelled well.

He claimed to be the Messiah spoken of by the writers of the Old Testament, John the Baptist, preparing the way for him, was equal to the greatest of men, but the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John. Men must believe that he is the Messiah, and confess him before men or suffer future torment; in the day of judgment the cities which rejected his claim would fare worse than Sodom and Gomorrah, while men who believed and followed him would have immense power and glory.† A great crisis, or revolution, is soon to take place, and the son of man is to establish the kingdom of heaven; the time is near but yet still uncertain; he himself knows not the day and hour.‡ But he is already highly exalted, greater than the Sabbath and the Temple, all things are given to him by the father whom he alone knows, and by whom he is directly known.§

In this new state of things all temporal and material cares are to cease, so he bids men not lay up treasures on earth, but only in Heaven; to take no thought for life what they should eat, or drink, or wherewithal be clad; for if they seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness all these things will be added, and they be fed like the wild birds, and clothed as the lilies are. If God care for grass and sparrows so will he much more for them, and give good things to such as

* Math. XXV. 46, VII. 13–14, XIII. 37–42, 49–50, et al.

† Math. X. 32–35, 37–39, XI. 20–24, XVI. 14–20, 24–28, XIX. 27–30, et al. parallels.

‡ Math. X. 5–15, 23–34, XXIV. et al.

§ Math. XII. 1–8, XI. 25–27, et al. parallels.

ask him.* If brought to trial before magistrates for attempting to establish this kingdom, they must take no thought for defense, for it will be given them at the moment what they shall say; it is not they but God who speaks, only through them.

Yet spite of these obvious defects in his scheme of doctrine, which ought not to astonish us or to be denied, there is such a deep, fresh, manly piety in his teachings, such love for man under all circumstances, poor, oppressed, despised, and sinful, as we find nowhere else in the whole compass of antiquity. God is a father even to the prodigal, goes out after him, falls on his neck with welcoming delight that the lost is found, and the dead come back alive once more. Men are to be brothers, each neighbor to all mankind: the greatest is to serve the least; even enemies be forgiven seventy times seven, and prayed for spite of their active cursing. According to one biographer, on the cross he prayed "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But this synoptical doctrine alone was felt to be inadequate to the wants of man; so many other gospels were written which were variously received and found acceptance with the great writers of the Christian church till the third and fourth century.† The fourth canonical gospel contains much which is fair and good but utterly foreign to the other three; yet while free from Jewish limitation other new restrictions are

* Math. VI. 19–21, 24–34, VII. 7–11, XVIII. 18–19, XIX. 21–24.

† See how they were used by Tatian, whose *Diatessaron* was a *Diapente,* Justin Martyr, Ignatius, the Clements of Rome and Alexandria, Origen, etc. The lost work of Papias would doubtless settle many curious questions. See Credner's Beiträge, and Ewald in his Jahrbücher, B. V. p. 62, et seq.

therein put on the free development of religion: men must believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Logos. No doubt the teaching of Jesus in the synoptics was thought too external and exclusively practical by some; and the fourth gospel, with divers others, was written to supply a conscious want. The Epistles of Paul betray the same thing.

To sum up the main points of the matter more briefly; in an age of gross wickedness, among a people arrogant, and proud of their descent from Abraham — a mythological character of some excellence; wedded to the ritual law, which they professed to have received, by miracle from God, through Moses — another and greater mythological hero — in a nation of monotheists, haughty yet cunning, morose, jealous, vindictive, loving the little corner of space, called Judea, above all the rest of the world; fancying themselves the "chosen people" and special favorites of God; in the midst of a nation wedded to their forms, sunk in ignorance, precipitated into sin, and, still more, expecting a deliverer, who would repel their political foes, reunite the scattered children of Jacob, and restore them to power, conquer all nations, reëstablish the formal service of the temple in all its magnificent pomp, and exalt Jerusalem above all the cities of the earth forever,— amid all this, and the opposition it raised to a spiritual man, Jesus fell back on the moral and religious sentiment in man; uttered manifold oracles of humanity, as the infinite spoke in his noble soul; stirred men to deep emotions; laid down some principles of conduct wide as the soul of man and true as eternal God; taught a form of religion,— piety and morality, — far before any thing known then to the world of

men; but yet mistook himself for that miraculous and impossible deliverer of his nation whom the people waited for in vain.

In an age full of vengeance he makes love the pivotal principle which all things must turn upon. Take one example as it stands in the synoptics. A man asks what he shall do to fulfil the idea of man, and have "eternal life?" He bids him keep the moral law, written eternally in the nature of man; specifies some of its plainest prohibitions, and adds, Love your neighbor as yourself. When asked the greatest commandment of the law, he thus sums up all the law and the prophets also: "Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Here is the sum of religious doctrine. He gives the highest aim for man: Be perfect as God. He declares the blessedness; present and eternal, of such as do the will of God. The spirit of God shall be in them, revealing truth; the kingdom of God shall be theirs.

He gives no extended form of his views in theology, anthropology, politics, or philosophy. But the great truth of God's goodness, and man's spiritual nature, are implied in all his teachings. He says little of the immortality of the soul; much less than some "Heathens" before him; but it is everywhere implied. As the doctrine was familiar, he dwells little upon it.

It is vain to deny, or attempt to conceal, the errors in his doctrine,— a revengeful God, a devil absolutely evil, an eternal hell, a speedy end of the world; but the actual superiority of the mode of religion he taught, its sublime faith in God, its profound humanity, seem also as clear as the noonday sun.

Such, then, is the religious doctrine of Jesus. It

was always taught with direct application to life; not as science, but as daily duty. Love of God was no abstraction. It implied love of wisdom, justice, purity, goodness, holiness, charity. To love these is to love God; to *love* them is to *live* them. It implies abhorrence of evil for its own sake; a desire and effort to be perfect as God, to tolerate no wrong action, wrong thought, or wrong feeling; to make the heart right, the head right, the hand right; to serve God, not with the lips alone, but the life, not only in Jerusalem and Gerizim, but everywhere; not by tithing mint, anise, and cumin, but by judgment, mercy, and faith; not by saying "Lord, lord," "Save us, good lord," but by doing the father's will. It implies a faith that is stronger than fear, prevails over every sorrow, grief, disappointment, and asks only this — Thy will be done; a love which is strongest in times of trouble, which never fails when mere human affection goes stooping and feeble, weeping its tears of blood; a love which annihilates temptation, and in the hour of mortal agony brings as it were an angel from the sky; an absolute trust in God, a brave unconcern for the morrow, so long as the day's duties are faithfully done. It is a love of goodness and religion for their own sake, not for the bribe of heaven, or the dread of hell. It implies a reunion of man and God, till we think God's thought, and will God's will, and so have God abiding in us, and become one with him.

The other doctrine, love of man, is love of all as yourself, not because they have no faults, but in spite thereof. To feel no enmity towards enemies; to labor for them with love; pray for them with pitying affection, remembering the less they deserve, the more they need; this was the doctrine of love. It demands that

the rich, the wise, the holy, help the poor, the foolish, the sinful; that the strong bear the burdens of the weak, not bind them on anew. It tells a man that his excellence and ability are not for himself alone, but for all mankind, of which he is but one, beginning first with the nearest of the needy. It makes the strong the guardians, not the tyrants of the weak. It said: Go to the publicans and sinners, and call them to repentance; go to men trodden down by the hoof of the oppressor, rebuke him lovingly, but snatch the spoil from his bloody teeth; go to men sick with desolation, covered all over with the leprosy of sin, bowed together and squalid with their inveterate disease, bid them live and sin no more. It despairs of no man; sees the soul of goodness in things evil; knows the soul in its intimate recess never consents to sin, nor loves the hateful. It would improve men's circumstances to mend their heart; their heart to mend their circumstances. It does not say alone, with piteous whine — God save the wicked and the weak, but puts its own shoulder to work; divides its raiment and shares its loaf.

To say all, in brief these two cardinal doctrines demanded a DIVINE LIFE, where every action of the hand, the head, the heart, is in obedience to the law of the Soul; in harmony with the all-perfect. This was Christ's notion of worship. It asked for nothing ritual, formal; laid no stress on special days, forms, rites, creeds. Its rite, its creed, its substance and its form, are all contained in that one command, LOVE MAN AS YOURSELF; GOD ABOVE ALL. None can say, or need suppose, that Jesus consciously intended all the consequences which we see resulting from these principles, or that he even foresaw the effects thereof, more than Monk Schwarz expected the results of his invention.

Thus far the application was universal as the doctrine. But he taught something which is ritual. *Baptism and the supper.* The first was a common rite at the time, used even by the "heathens." In a nation dwelling in a warm climate, and so fond of symbols as the Jews, it was a natural expression of the convert's change of life. Sensual men must interpret their religion to the senses, as the Hollanders have their Bible in Dutch. It seems to have been an accommodation to the wants of the times as he spoke the popular language. Did he lay any stress on this watery dispensation; count it valuable of itself? Then we must drop a tear for the weakness; for no outward act can change the heart, and God is not to be mocked, pleased, or served with a form. Is there any reason to suppose he ever designed it to be permanent? It is indeed said that he bade the disciples teach all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the son and the holy ghost." * But since the apostles never mention the command, nor the form, since it is opposite to the general spirit of his precepts, it must be put with the many other things which are to be examined with much care before they are referred to him. But if it came from him, we can only say, There is no perfect guide but the father.

The second form,— was it of more account than the first? Who shall tell us the "Lord's supper" was designed to be permanent more than washing the feet, if that be a fact, which the pope likewise imitates? Did he place any value on the dispensation of wine; design it to extend beyond the company then present? If we may trust the account, he asks his friends, at supper, to remember him, when they break bread. It

* Math. XXVIII. 19, and the parallels.

was simple, natural, affectionate, beautiful. Was this a foundation of a form; to last forever; a form valuable in itself; essential to man's spiritual welfare; a form pleasing to him who is all in all? To say Jesus laid any stress on it as a valuable and perpetual rite, is, to go beyond what is written. It needs no reply. The thing may be useful, beautiful, comforting to a million souls; truly it has been so. In Christianity there is milk for babes and meat for men, that the truth may be given as they can receive it. Let each be fed with the father's bounty.*

* In the first edition I inserted here these lines:—

> "Behold the child by nature's kindly law,
> Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw;
> Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
> A little louder, but as empty quite."

The thought I wished to express was this: The two ordinances, in comparison with a religious life and character, are no more than the rattles and straws of a child, compared with the attainments of an accomplished man; it is a beautiful feature of God's Providence that things in themselves of no value, can yet serve so important a purpose as the intellectual, moral, and religious development of a man. The words were understood in a very different sense — sometimes even by my friends. I omitted them in the English edition — for the publisher at first designed to have no notes in that, and I did not wish to reprint, without explanation, what had been so much misunderstood before.

CHAPTER IV

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS, ITS REAL AND PRETENDED SOURCE

On what authority did Jesus teach? On that of the most high God, as he expressly states, and often. But to have the authority of God, is not that miraculous? How can man have God's authority in the natural way? Let us look at the matter.

I. *The only Authority of a Doctrine is its Truth.*

Truth is the relation of things as they are; falsehood as they are not. No doctrine can have a higher condemnation than to be convicted of falsehood; none a higher authority than to be proved true. God is the author of things as they are; therefore of this relation, and therefore of truth. He that delivers the truth then has so far the authority of truth's God. Then it will be asked, How do we know Christianity is true, or that it is our duty to love man and God? Now when it is asked, How do I know that I exist; that doubting is doubting; that half is less than the whole; that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be? the questioner is set down as a strange man. But it has somehow come to pass, that he is reckoned a very acute and Christian person, who doubts moral and religious axioms, and asks, How do I know that right is right, and wrong wrong, and goodness good? Alas, there are men among the Christians, who place virtue and religion on a lower ground than Aristippus and

Democritus, men branded as heathens and atheists. Let us know what we are about.

It was said above,* there are, practically, four sources of knowledge — direct and indirect, primary and secondary,— namely, perception for sensible things; intuition for spiritual things; reflection for logical things; and testimony of historical things. If the doctrines of Christianity are eternal truths, they are not sensible things, not historical things, and of course do not depend on sensual perception, nor historical testimony, but can be presented directly to the consciousness of men at one age as well as another, and thus if they are matters of reflection, may be made plain to all who have the reflective faculty and will use it; if they are matters of intuition, to all who have the intuitive faculty, and will let it act. Now the duty we owe to man, that of loving him as ourselves; the duty we owe to God, that of loving him above all, is a matter of intuition; it proceeds from the very nature of man and is inseparable from that nature; we recognize the truth of the precept as soon as it is stated, and see the truth of it soon as the unprejudiced mind looks that way. It is no less a matter of reflection likewise. He that reflects on the idea of God as given by intuition, on his own nature as he learns it from his mental operations, sees that this twofold duty flows logically from these premises. The truth of these doctrines, then, may be known by both intuition and reflection. He that teaches a doctrine eternally true, does not set forth a private and peculiar thing resting on private authority and historical evidence, but as everlasting reality, which rests on the ground of all truth, the public and eternal authority of unchanging God. A

* Book III. ch. II.

false doctrine is not of God. It has no background of Godhead. It rests on the authority of Simon Peter or Simon Magus; of him that sets it forth. It is his private, personal property. When the devil speaks a lie, he speaketh of his own; but when a son of God speaks the truth, he speaks not his own word but the father's. Must a man indorse God's word to make it current?

Again, if the truth of any doctrines rest on the personal authority of Jesus, it was not a duty to observe them before he spoke; for he, being the cause, or indispensable occasion of the duty, to make the effect precede the cause is an absurdity too great for modern divines. Besides, if it depends on Jesus, it is not eternally true; a religious doctrine that was not true and binding yesterday, may become a lie again by to-morrow; if not eternally true, it is no truth at all. Absolute truth is the same always and everywhere. Personal authority adds nothing to a mathematical demonstration; can it more to a moral institution? Can authority alter the relation of things? A voice speaking from heaven, and working more wonders than Æsop and the saints, or Moses and the Sibyl, relate, cannot make it our duty to hate God, or man; no such voice can add any new obligation to the law God wrote in us.

When it is said that the doctrines of religion, like the truth of science, rest on their own authority, or that of unchanging God, they are then seen to stand on the highest and safest ground that is possible — the ground of absolute truth. Then if all the evangelists and apostles were liars; if Jesus were mistaken in a thousand things; if he were a hypocrite; yes, if he never lived, but the New Testament were a sheer forgery

from end to end, these doctrines are just the same, absolute truth.

But, on the other hand, if these depend on the infallible authority of Jesus, then if he was mistaken in any one point his authority is gone in all; if the evangelists were mistaken in any one point, we can never be certain we have the words of Jesus in a particular case, and then where is "historical Christianity?"

Now it is a most notorious fact, that the apostles and evangelists were greatly mistaken in some points. It is easy to show, if we have the exact words of Jesus, that he also was mistaken in some points of the greatest magnitude — in the character of God, the existence of the Devil, the eternal damnation of men, in the interpretation of the Old Testament, in the doctrine of demons, in the celebrated prediction of his second coming and the end of the world, within a few years. If religion or Christianity rest on his authority, and that alone, it falls when the foundation falls, and that stands at the mercy of a school-boy. If he is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to him the true riches?

II. *Of the authority derived from the alleged miracles of Jesus.*

Of late years it has been unpopular with theological writers to rest the authority of Christianity on its truth, and not its truth on its authority. It must be confessed there is some inconvenience in the case, for if this method of trusting truth alone and not authority be followed, by and by some things which have much authority and no truth to support them, may come to the ground. The same thing took place in the middle

ages, when Abelard looked into theology, explaining and defending some of the doctrines of the church by reason. The church said, If you commend the reasonable as such, you must condemn the not-reasonable, and then where are we? A significant question truly. So the church "cried out upon him" as a heretic, because he trusted reason more than a blind relief in the traditions of men, which the church has long had the impudence to call "faith in God." It is often said, in our times, that Christianity rests on miracles; that the authority of the miracle-worker authenticates his doctrine; if a teacher can raise the dead, he must have a commission from God to teach true doctrine; his word is the standard of truth. Here the fact and the value of miracles are both assumed outright.

Now if it could be shown that Christianity rested on miracles, or had more or less connection with them, it yet proves nothing peculiar in the case, for other forms of religions, fetichistic, polytheistic, and monotheistic, appeal to the same authority. If a nation is rude and supersitious, the claim to miracles is the more common; their authority the greater.* To take the popular no-

* See a curious story respecting an Eastern Calif and his decision between the conflicting claims of the Christians and Mahometans, in Marco Polo, ed. Marsden, Book I. ch. VIII. p. 67–69. See also Book II. ch. II. p. 275, et seq.; Book III. ch. XX. § 4, p. 648, et seq. See the numerous miracles collected by Valerius Maximus in his treatise, De Prodigiis, Opp. ed. Hase, Vol. I. Lib. I. ch. VI.; De Somniis, ch. VII.; De Miraculis, ch. VIII. Julius Obsequens, Prodigiorum, Liber Imperfectus: Jo. Laurenti Lydi, De Ostentis, Fragmenta, passim, ad calc. Opp. Val. Max. See the Incarnation and Ascension of Budha, in Upham, The Mahávansi, the Raja Ratnacari, and the Rajavali; Lond. 1833, Vol. I. p. 1, et seq.: for miracles and marvels, passim. See Spencer's Discourse concerning Prodigies; Lond. 1665. But see Trenck, Notes on the Miracles, etc.; N. Y. 1850, p. 25, et seq. p. 75, et seq.

tion, the Jewish religion began in miracles, was continued, and will end in miracles. The Mahometan tells us the Koran is a miracle; its author had miraculous inspiration, visions, and revelations. The writings of the Greeks, the Romans, the Scandinavians and the Hindoos, the Chinese and Persians, are full of miracles. In fetichism all is miracle, and its authority, therefore, the best in the world. The Catholic church and the Latter-day-Saints still claim the power of working them, and, therefore, of authenticating whatever they will, if a miracle have the alleged virtue.

Now in resting Christianity on this basis we must do one of two things: either, first, we must admit that Christianity rests on the same foundation with the lowest fetichism, but has less divine authority than that, for if miracles constitute the authority, then that is the best form of religion which counts the most miracles; or, secondly, we must deny the reality of all miracles except the Christian, in order to give exclusive sway to Christianity. But the devotees of each other form will retort the denial, and claim exclusive credence for their favorite wonders. The serious inquirer will ask, If such be the evidence, what is truth, and how shall I get at it? And if he does not stop for a time in scepticism, at best in indifference, why he is a very rare man. In this state of the case theologians have felt bound, in logic, either to prove the superiority of Christian miracles, or to deny all other miracles. The first method is not possible, the Hindoo Priest surpasses the Christian in the number, and magnitude and antiquity of his miracles. The second, therefore, is the only method left. Accordingly, most ingenious attempts have been made to devise some test which will spare the Christian and

condemn all other miracles. The Protestant saves only those mentioned in the Bible; the Catholic, more consistently, thinks the faculty immanent in the church, and claims miracles down to the present day. But all these attempts to establish a suitable criterion have been fruitless, and even worse, often exposing more than the folly of their authors.* However, they who argue from the miracles alone, assume two things; first, that miracles prove the divinity of a doctrine; secondly, that they were wrought in connection with the Christian doctrine. If one ask proof of these significant premises, it is not easy to come by. This subject of miracles demands a careful attention. Here are two questions to be asked. First, are miracles possible? Second, did they actually occur in the case of Christianity?

I. *Are miracles possible?*

The answer depends on the definition of the term. The point we are to reason from is the idea of God, who must be the cause of the miracle. Now a miracle is one of three things:—

1. It is a transgression of all law which God has made; or,

2. A transgression of all known laws, but obedience to a law which we may yet discover; or,

3. A transgression of all law known or knowable by man, but yet in conformity with some law out of our reach.

* See Douglas's Criterion, or Miracles Examined; Lond. 1754, and Leslie's Short Method with the Deists. See an ingenious illustration of the folly of one of Leslie's canons in Palfrey, Academical Lectures, etc. Vol. II. p. 150, note ii. See Fehmelius De Criteriis Errorum circa Religionem communibus; Lips. 1713, 1 Vol. 4to.

1. To take the first definition. A miracle is not possible, as it involves a contradiction. The infinite God must have made the most perfect laws possible in the nature of things; it is absurd and self-contradictory to suppose the reverse. But if his laws are perfect and the nature of things unchangeable, why should he alter these laws? The change can only be for the worse. To suppose he does this is to accuse God of caprice. If he be the ultimate cause of the phenomena and laws of the universe, to suppose in a given case he changes these phenomena and laws, is either to make God fickle and therefore not worthy to be relied on; or else inferior to nature, of which he is yet the cause.

2. To take the second definition. It is no miracle at all, but simply an act, which at first we cannot understand and refer to the process of its causation. The most common events, such as growth, vitality, sensation, affection, thought, are miracles. Besides, the miracle is of a most fluctuating character. The miracle-worker of to-day is a matter-of-fact juggler to-morrow. The explosion of gunpowder, the production of magnified images of any object, the phenomena of mineral and animal magnetism, are miracles in one age, but common things in the next. Such wonders prove only the skill of the performer. Science each year adds new wonders to our store. The master of a locomotive steam-engine would have been thought greater than Jupiter Tonans or the Elohim thirty centuries ago.

3. To take the third hypothesis. There is no antecedent objection, nor metaphysical impossibility in the case. Finite man not only does not, but cannot understand all the modes of Gods action; all the laws of

his being. There may be higher beings, to whom God reveals himself in modes that we can never know, for we cannot tell the secrets of God, nor determine *à priori* the modes of his manifestation. In this sense a miracle is possible. The world is a perpetual miracle of this sort. Nature is the art of God; can we fully comprehend it? Life, being, creation, duration, do we understand these actual things? How then can we say to the infinite, hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; there are no more ways wherein thy being acts? * Man is not the measure of God. Let us use the word in this latter sense.

II. *Did miracles occur in the case of Jesus?*

This question is purely historical; to be answered, like all other historical questions, by competent testimony. Have we testimony adequate to prove the fact?

* See Babbage, Ninth Bridgewater Treatise; Phila. 1841, p. VII. XXVI. and Sir John Herschel's Letter to Mr. Lyell therein, p. 212. Vestiges of Nat. Hist. of Creation, p. 145, et seq. Pascal has some remarkable speculations on Miracles. Pensées, P. II. Art. 16; ed. Paris, 1839, p. 323, et seq. He defines a miracle as *an effect which exceeds the natural force of the means employed to bring it about.* The non-miracle is an effect which does not exceed the force, p. 342. He adds they who effect cures by the invocation of the devil, work no miracle, for *that does not exceed the devil's natural power! A fortiori,* it is impossible for God to work a miracle. Leibnitz has some strange remarks on this subject scattered about in his disorderly writings. See what he says in reply to M. Bayle, Théodicée. Pt. III. § 248–9. See too p. 776, ed. Erdmann. See the acute remarks of Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiæ, P. I. qu. 101, et seq. See Theol. Quartal Schrift (Tübig.) for 1845, p. 265, et seq. C. F. Ammon, Nova Opuscula theologica; Gött. 1803, p. 157, et seq. See Gazzaniga, Praelections theologicæ, etc.; Venet. 1803, 9 Vol. 4to. Vol. I. Diss. ii. c. 7. p. 71, et seq.

Antecedent to all experience one empirical thing is probable as another. To the first man, with no experience, birth from one parent is no more surprising than birth from two; to feed five men with five ship-loads of corn, or five thousand with five loaves; the reproduction of an arm, or a finger nail; the awakening from a four days' death, or a four hours' sleep; to change water into wine, or mineral coal into burning gas; the descent into the sea, or the ascent into the sky, the prediction of a future or the memory of a past event; — all are alike, one as credible as the other. But to take our past experience of the nature of things, the case wears a different aspect. We demand more evidence for a strange than a common thing. From the very constitution of the mind a prudent man supposes that the laws of nature continue; that the same cause produces always the same effects, if the circumstances remain the same. If it were related to us, by four strangers who had crossed the ocean in the same vessel, that a man, now in London, cured diseases, opened the blind eyes, restored the wasted limb, and raised men from the dead, all by a mere word; that he himself was born miraculously, and attended by miracles all his life,— who would believe the story? We should be justified in demanding a large amount of the most unimpeachable evidence. This opinion is confirmed by the doubt of scientific men in respect of "animal magnetism" and "spiritualism"— where no law is violated but a faculty hitherto little noticed is disclosed.

Now if we look after the facts of the case, we find the evidence for the Christian miracles is very scanty in extent, and very uncertain in character. We must depend on the testimony of the epistolary and the histor-

ical books of the New Testament. It is a notorious fact that the genuine epistles, the earliest Christian documents, make no mention of any miracles performed by Jesus; and when we consider the character of Paul, his strong love of the marvellous, the manner in which he dwells on the appearance of Jesus to him after death, it seems surprising, if he believed the other miracles, that he does not allude to them. To examine the testimony of the gospels; two profess to contain the evidence of eye-witnesses. But we are certain these books came in their present shape from John and Matthew; it is certain they were not written till long after the events related. The gospel ascribed to John is of small historical value if of any at all. But still more, each of them relates what the writers could not have been witness to; so we have nothing but hearsay and conjecture. Besides, these authors shared the common prejudice of their times, and disagree one with the other. The gospels of Mark and Luke — who were not eye-witnesses — in some points corroborate the testimony of John and Matthew; in others add nothing; in yet others they contradict each other as well as John and Matthew. But there are still other accounts — the apocryphal gospels — some of them perhaps older than the gospel of Matthew, certainly older than John, and these make the case worse by disclosing the fondness for miracles that marked the Christians of that early period.* Taking all these things into consideration, and remembering that in many particulars the three first gospels

* See these Apocryphal Works referred to in note on p. 225. Also Jones, Method of settling the canonical Authority of the N. T.; Oxford, 1797, 3 vols. The Apoc. N. T.; Boston, 1832. Wake, Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, etc.; Oxford, 1840. See Mosheim's Dissertation on the causes which led to the

are but one witness, adding the current belief of the times in favor of miracles, the evidence to prove their historical reality is almost nothing, admitting we have the genuine books of the disciples; it at least is such evidence as would not be considered of much value in a court of justice. However the absence of testimony does not prove that miracles were not performed, for a universal negative of this character cannot be proved.*

If one were to look carefully at the evidence in favor of the Christian miracles, and proceed with the caution of a true inquirer, he must come to the conclusion, I think, that they cannot be admitted as facts. The resurrection — a miracle alleged to be wrought upon Jesus, not by him,— has more evidence, though of the same inferior kind, than any other, for it is attested by the epistles, as well as the gospels, and was one cornerstone of the Christian church. But here, is the testimony sufficient to show that a man thoroughly dead as Abraham and Isaac were, came back to life; passed through closed doors, and ascended into the sky? I cannot speak for others — but most certainly I cannot believe such monstrous facts on such evidence.†

composition of suppositious works among the early Christians, in his Diss. ad H. E. pertinentes; Alt. 1743, Vol. I. p. 221, et seq. Mr. Norton, ubi sup. Vol. III. Ch. XI. treats of the subject but not with his usual learning.

* See some just remarks in Hennel, ubi sub. Ch. VIII.; Strauss, Leben Jesu, § 1–15, § 90–103, 132–139; Glaubenslehre, § 17, and on the other hand Neander and Tholuck. See De Wette, Wesen des Glaubens, § 60. Flügge, Gesch. theol. Wissenschaften; Halle, 1796, Vol. I. p. 97, et seq. For the value early set on miraculous evidence, see the Treatise of Theophilus (Bp. of Antioch, in the 2d cent.), address to Autolycus, Lib. I. C. 13, et al. Trenck, ubi sup.

† But see Furness, ubi sup. ch. VII. VIII. XIII. See the candid remarks of De Wette, ubi sup. § 61. He admits the

There is far more testimony to prove the fact of miracles, witchcraft, and diabolical possessions in times comparatively modern, than to prove the Christian miracles. It is well known, that the most credible writers among the early Christians, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret, and others, believed that the miraculous power continued in great vigor in their time.* But to come down still later the case of St. Bernard of Clairvaux is more to the point. He lived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. His life has been written in part by William, Abbot of St. Thierry, Ernald, Abbot of Bonnevaux, and Geoffrey, Abbot of Igny, "all eyewitnesses of the saint's actions." Another life was written by Alanus, Bishop of Auxerre, and still another by John the Hermit, not long after the death of Bernard, both his contemporaries. Besides, there are

difficulties of the case, and only saves the general fact of the resurrection, by rejecting the authenticity of the 4th and part of the 3d Gospel (p. 315, et seq.), for he thinks the details of their accounts are inadmissible.

* On this subject of the miraculous power in the early church, see the celebrated treatise of Middleton, A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers in the Christian Church, etc.; Lond. 1749, in his Works, Lond. 1752, Vol. I. See Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Pt. I. ch. I. § 8, and Murdock's note. The testimony of Chrysostom is fluctuating. See Middleton, Vol. I. p. 105, et seq. See Newman's defense of the Cath. miracles in the dissertation prefixed to Vol. I. of the Tr. of Fleury's History of the Church. Conrad Lycosthenes, Prodigiorum ac Ostentorum Chronicon; Basil, 1557, 1 Vol. Fol. The Treatise of St. Ephraim of Cherson on the miracle wrought by Clement, at the end of Cotelerius, Pat. Apost.; Ant. 1698, Vol. I. p. 811, et seq. The story of Simon Magus shows the credulity of the early church. See it in Hegesippus, Lib. III. C. II. See too Leo, Ep. ad Constant. Imp.; Augustinus Ep. 86, and Const. Apost. VI. 9. Bernino, Istoria, de tuttel, Heresie; Venet. 1711. 4 Vol. 4to. Sec. I. Ch. I. See the curious miracles related by Victor Vitensis and Aeneas Gazaeus, in Gibbon, Hist. ch. XXXVII.

three books on his miracles, one by Philip of Clairvaux, another by the monks of that place, and a third by the above-mentioned Geoffrey. He cured the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the blind, men possessed with devils, in many cases, before multitudes of people: he wrought thirty-six miracles in a single day, says one of these historians; converted men and women that could not understand the language he spoke in. His wonders are set down by the eye-witnesses themselves, men known to us by the testimony of others.* I do not hesitate in saying that there is far more evidence to support the miracles of St. Bernard than those mentioned in the New Testament.†

* See these books in Mabillon's edition of Bernard; Paris, 1721, Vol. II. p. 1071, et seq. See Fleury, Histoire Ecclesiastique, Liv. LXVI. et seq., and especially LXIX. ch. XVII.; ed. Nismes, 1779, Vol. X. p. 147, et seq., where is a summary of some of his most important miracles. See likewise Les Vies des Saints; Paris, 1701, Vol. II. p. 288–326; Butler's Lives of the Saints; Lond. 1815, Vol. VIII. p. 227–274; Milner's History of the Church of Christ, etc., Vol. III.; Christian Examiner for March, 1841, Art. I. At the recent exhibition of "the holy Robe of Jesus" at Tréves, *no less than eleven miraculous cures were effected,* so it is said. Miracula Stultis! See Marx, History of the Holy Robe of J. C. with an account of the miraculous cures performed by the said Robe from 18th August to 6th October, 1844; Phil. 1845. Numerous bishops attended the exhibition, and more than 1,100,000 persons, says the book. See p. 97, et seq. See too John Ronge, the holy coat of Tréves and the new German Catholic Church; New York, 1845. See an account of the miracle wrought by Vespasian, in Tacitus, Hist. Lib. IV. C. 81, Opp. ed. Paris, 1819, III. p. 490, et seq. See several similar wonders in Ammon, ubi sup. p. 165, et seq.

† Bernino, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 204, gives a very dramatic account of a scene between St. Macarius and a heretic, in which, to prove the truth of the catholic doctrine, the saint raises from the dead a monk who had been buried about a month! For other confirmatory miracles, see Bernino, passim. It is well known that Petrarch, in the 14th century, believed the miracles of Pope Urban his own contemporary; and de

But we are to accept such testimony with great caution. The tendency of men to believe the thing happens which they expect to happen; the tendency of rumor to exaggerate a real occurrence, into a surprising or miraculous affair, is well known. A century and a half have not gone by since witches were tried by a special court in Massachusetts; convicted by a jury of twelve good men and true; preached against by the clergy, and executed by the common hangman. Any one who looks carefully and without prejudice into the matter sees, I think, more evidence for the reality of those "wonders of the invisible world" than for the Christian miracles. Here is the testimony of scholars, clergymen, witnesses examined under oath, jurymen, and judges; the confession of honest men; of persons whose character is well known at the present day, to prove the reality of witchcraft and the actual occurrence of miraculous facts; of the interference of powers more than human in the affairs of the world.* The appearance of spectres and ghosts,

Sade his biographer, writing in 1767, will have us believe that the pope actually performed 80 miracles, besides raising two girls from the dead in the city of Avignon. Junker, in his Ehrengedächtnitz Lutheri (p. 276–89, ed. 1707), says that a portrait of Luther at Ober-Rossla in Weimar, at three different times, was covered with a profuse sweat while the preacher was speaking of the sad state of the schools and churches. See Reformation Almanach für 1817, p. XXVI. See the story of Spiridion, and his numerous miracles, in Sozomen, Hist. Eccles. Lib. I. C. XI.; ed. Par. 1544, p. 14, et seq. See Wright's Essay on the Lit. and Superstitions of England in middle ages; Lond. 1846, Vol. II. Essay X. XII.

* See, who will, Cotton Mather's Wonders of the Invisible World; Boston, 1693. Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience, etc., and the learned authors in Diabology therein cited. See also Hale's Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft, etc.; Boston, 1702. Calef, More Wonders from the Invisible World; London, 1700. Upham's Lectures on Witchcraft, etc. Stone's

of the devil as "a little black man;" the power of witches to ride through the air, overturn a ship, raise storms, and torture men at a distance, is attested by a crowd of witnesses, perfectly overshadowing to a man of easy faith.* In the celebrated case of Richard Dugdale, the "Surey Demoniack," or "Surey Impostor," † — which occurred in the latter part of the

History of Beverly; Boston 1843, p. 213, et seq. Mather's Magnalia, passim. Chandler's Criminal Trials, p. 65, et seq. Bancroft, ubi sup. ch. XIX. See many curious particulars in Hutchinson's Essay concerning Witchcraft, etc.; second edition, London, 1720. See Remigius, Demonolatriæ, Libri III.; Col. 1576, 1 Vol. 12mo. I have not seen the book, but it is said to contain matter derived from the cases of about 900 persons executed for witchcraft in 15 years at Lorraine. See a contemporary Narrative of the Proceedings against Dame Alice Kyteler, prosecuted for Sorcery in 1324 by the Bp. of Ossory; Lond. 1843, 1 Vol. 4to, Introduction. See Account of the Trial, Confession, etc., of Six Witches at Maidstone, etc. 1652, and the Trial of Three Witches, etc. 1645; Lond. 1837. In the 13th century the Cath. Church declared a disbelief of witchcraft to be Heresy. See, who will, the Bulls of the Popes relative to this from Greg. IX. down to the famous Bull of Innoc. VIII. (1484) Summis desiderantes. The celebrated work of Sprenger & Kramer, Malleus Malleficarum (1484 at Saesse) may be consulted by the curious. In 1487 this infamous work was approved by the theological faculty at Cologne, and acquired a great reputation in the church. It is remarkable that in 1650, when two Jesuits in Germany wrote against trials for Witchcraft, the most famous Protestant divines — as *Pott* at Jena and *Carpzov* at Leipsic — defended the prosecution, and wished men punished for disbelieving in witchcraft.. See Gazzaniga, ubi sup. Vol. IV. Diss. I. C. 20, p. 44, et seq.

* Henry More has made a pretty collection of cases out of authors now forgotten, in Antidote against Atheism, Book III. ch. I.–XII. Appendix, ch. XII. XIII. Immortalitas Animæ, Lib. II. ch. XV.–XVII.; Lib. III. ch. IV. See his Enchiridion Metaphysicum, Pars. I. ch. XXVI. W. G. Solden has written a Geschichte der Hexen-Processe, etc.; Stuttgart, 1843. See too Hauber's Zauberbibliothek; 3 vols. 8vo. Horst, Zauberbibliothek, 6 vols. 8vo. and Grässe, Bibliotheca Magica, etc.; Leip. 1843.

† "The Surey Demoniack, or an Account of Satan's Strange

seventeenth century, in England, and was a most notorious affair,— we have the testimony of nine dissenting clergymen, to prove his diabolical miracles, all of them familiar with the "Demoniack;" and also the depositions of many "credible persons," sworn to before two magistrates, to confirm the wonder. Yet it turned out at last that there was no miracle in the case.* It is needless to mention the "miracles" wrought at the tomb of the Abbé de Paris, during the last century,† or, in our own time, those of father

and Dreadful Actings in and about the Body of Richard Dugdale," etc. etc.; London, 1697.

* See Taylor's "The Devil turned Casuist," etc.; London, 1697. "Lancashire Levite Rebuked;" 1698, and "The Surey Impostor." The latter I copy from citations in "A Vindication of the Surey Demoniack," etc.; London, 1698. Such as wish to see melancholy specimens of human folly may consult also Barrows, "The Lord's Arm stretched out," etc. etc.; London, 1664. "The Second Part of the Boy of Bilson," etc. etc.; London, 1698. "A Relation of the Diabolical Practices of above twenty Witches of Renfreu, etc., contained in their Tryals, etc., and for which several of them have been executed the present Year," 1697; London, 1697. "Sadducismus Debellatus, Narrative of the Sorceries and Witchcrafts of the Devil upon Mrs. Christian Shaw, etc. of Renfreu," etc.; London, 1698. See Glanvill, a Blow at Modern Sadducism, in some considerations about Witchcraft, etc. etc.; 4th ed. London, 1668. Essays, etc.; London, 1676. Essay VI. Against Modern Sadducism in the matter of Witches and Apparitions. Sadducismus triumphatus, or evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions, etc. etc.; 4th ed. London, 1726. Yet the author was a highly intelligent man, who appreciated Bacon and applauded Descartes, and contended for free inquiry and against superstition and fanaticism, with wit and argument (see Essay VII.), Howell estimates that thirty thousand suffered death for witchcraft, in England, during one hundred and fifty years. State Trials, Vol. II. p. 1051, as cited by Chandler, ubi sup. p. 69.

† See the celebrated work of M. de Montgéron, La Vérité des Miracles de M. de Paris, demontrée, etc.; Utrecht, 1737, 1 Vol. 4to. The author was a *Conseiller au Parlement,* and himself converted by these miracles. See too the *Advertissemont*

Matthews in Ireland, and the Mormonites in New England. A miracle is never looked for but it comes.*

No man can say there was not something at the bottom of the Christian "miracles," and of witchcrafts and possessions; I doubt not something not yet fully understood; but to suppose, on such evidence, that God departed from the usual law of the world, in these cases, is not very rational, to say the least; to make such a belief essential to Christianity is without warrant in the words of Christ.

But now admitting in argument that Jesus wrought all the miracles alleged; that his birth and resurrection were both miraculous; that he was the only person endowed with such miraculous power — it does not thence follow that he would teach true doctrine. Must a revealer of transient miracles to the sense necessarily be a revealer of eternal truth to the soul? It follows

of this ed., and the "consequens qù'on doit tirér des Miracles, etc." with the remarkable "Piéces justificatives," at the end of the volume. See Mosheim Dissert. on this subject, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 309, et seq.

It is instructive to find Irenæus (II. 57) declaring that the *true disciples of Christ could work miracles in his time,* and that the dead *were raised and remained alive some years.* Eusebius, H. E. IV. 3, cites Quadratus, who lived half a century before Irenæus, to prove that men miraculously raised from the dead lived a considerable time, ed. Heinichen, Vol. I. p. 292. See the curious papers on *Folk-Lore,* in the Athenæum (London) for 1846.

* Well says Livy, XXIV. 10, Quae [Miracula] quo magis credebant simplices et religiosi homines, eo plura nunciabantur! See the remarkable literature connected with what is called "Spiritualism" already so copious, especially the works of Edmands, Rogers, Ballou, Bell, and Hare; the writings of A. J. Davis seem to be one of the most remarkable literary phenomena in the world, but it would be absurd to call them miraculous.

no more than the reverse. But admit it in argument. Then he must never be mistaken in the smallest particular. But this is contrary to fact; for if we may trust the record, he taught that he should appear again after his alleged ascension, and the world would end in that age.

Practically speaking, a miracle is a most dubious thing; in this case its proof the most uncertain. But on the supposition that our conviction of the truth of Religion must rest wholly or mainly on the fact, that Jesus wrought the alleged miracles, then is religion itself a most uncertain thing, and we in this age can never be so sure thereof, though our soul testify to its truth, as the old Jews, who rejected him, and yet had their senses to testify to the miracles. If the proof of religion be the sensations of the evangelists, then we can be no more certain of its truth than of the fact that Jesus had no human father!

But this question of miracles, whether true or false, is of no religious significance. When Mr. Locke said the doctrine proved the miracles, not the miracles the doctrine, he silently admitted their worthlessness. They can be useful only to such as deny our internal power of discerning truth.* Now the doctrine of

* "Let us see how far inspiration can enforce on the mind any opinion concerning God or his worship, when accompanied with a power to do a miracle, and here too, I say, the last determination must be that of reason. 1. Because *reason must be the judge what is a miracle, and what is not,* which — not knowing how far the power of natural causes do extend themselves, and what strange effects they may produce — is very hard to determine. *2. It will always be as great a miracle that God should alter the course of natural things,* as overturn the principles of knowledge and understanding in a man, by setting up any thing to be received by him as a truth which his reason cannot assent to, *as the miracle itself;* and *so at best it will be but one miracle against another, and the greater*

religion is eternally true. It requires only to be understood to be accepted. It is a matter of direct and positive knowledge, dependent on no outside authority, while the Christian miracles are, at best, but a matter of testimony, and therefore of secondary and indirect knowledge. The thing to be proved is notoriously true; the alleged means of proof notoriously uncertain. Is it not better, then, to proceed to religion at once? for when this is admitted to be as true as the demonstrations and axioms of science, as much a matter of certainty as the consciousness of our existence, then miracles are of no value. They may be interesting to the historian, the antiquary or physiologist, not to us as religious men. They now hang as a mill-stone about the neck of many a pious man, who can believe in religion, but not in the transformation of water to wine, or the resurrection of a body.

still on reason's side; it being hard to believe God should alter and put out of its ordinary course some phenomenon of the great world for once, and make things act contrary to their ordinary rule, purposely, that the mind of man might do so always afterwards, than that this is some fallacy or natural effect, of which he knows not the cause, let it look never so strange. . . . I do not hereby deny in the least, that God can do, or hath done, miracles for the confirmation of truth; but I only say that we cannot think he should do them to enforce doctrines or notions of himself or any worship of him not conformable to reason, or that we can receive such for truth for the miracle's sake; and even in those books which have the greatest proof of revelation from God, and the attestation of miracles to confirm their being so, *the miracles are to be judged by the doctrine, and not the doctrine by the miracle.*" King's Life of Locke, Vol. I. p. 231, et seq. See the remarks of Calvin, Institutes, Dedication to Francis I. Allen's Tr.; Lond. 1838, Vol. I. p. XIX. Gerhard in his Common Places, says, "Miracles prove nothing, unless they have a doctrinal Truth connected with them."

CHAPTER V

THE ESSENTIAL EXCELLENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Let us call the religious teachings of Jesus "Christianity"; it agrees generically with all other forms in this, that it is a religion. Its peculiarity is not in its doctrine of one infinite God; of the immortality of man, nor of future retribution. It is not in particular rules of morality, for precepts as true and beautiful may be found in heathen writers, who give us the same view of man's nature, duty, and destination. The great doctrines of Christianity were known long before Jesus, for God did not leave man four thousand years unable to find out his plainest duty. There is no precept of Jesus, no real duty commanded, no promise offered, no sanction held out, which cannot be paralleled by similar precepts in writers before him. The pure in heart saw God before as well as after him. Every imperfect form of religion was, more or less, an anticipation of Christianity. So far as a man has real religion, so far he has what is true in Christianity.* By its light Zoroaster, Confucius, Pythagoras, Socrates, with many millions of holy men, walked in the early times of the world. By this

* See Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation, etc. See Lactantius, Hist. Div. Lib. VII. C. 7, Nos. 4 and 7, who admits that all the doctrines of Christianity were taught before, but not collected into one mass. See Clem. Alex. Strom. I. 13, p. 349. Dr. Reginald Peacock, writing in the 15th century against the Lollards, says that Christianity added nothing at all (except *the Sacraments*) *to the moral law, for all of that was pri-*

they were cheered when their souls were bowed down, and they knew not which way to turn. They and their kindred, like Moses, were school-masters to prepare the world for Christianity; shadows of good things to come: the dayspring from on high; the Bethlehem star announcing the perfect religion which is to follow. Modern Christians love to deny that there are points of agreement between Christianity and its predecessors. The early apologists took just the opposite course.

1. The religious teachings of Jesus have this chief excellence, they allow men to advance indefinitely beyond him. He does not foreclose human consciousness against the income of new truth, nor make any one fact of human history a bar to the development of human nature. I do not find that he taught his doctrines either as a finality, or as one of many steps in the progressive development of mankind: he gives no opinion. The author of the fourth gospel makes him tell his disciples that he had other things to make known; that the comforter would teach them all things, and they should do greater works than he. Paul, professing to receive new revelations from the immortal Jesus, revolutionizes the doctrines of the historical person: and notwithstanding the profession of "following Jesus" as the sole authority, the Christian church has built up a "scheme of divinity" and a "plan of salvation" as much at variance with the recorded words of Jesus in the synoptics, as repug-

marily established, not on the Scriptures but on natural reason; and adds that *natural law must be obeyed, even if Christ and the apostles had taught what was opposed thereto.* Wharton in Appendix to Cave, Historia literaria, etc.; Lond. 1698, Vol. I. p. 136.

nant to common sense. No sect has practically taken the words of Jesus for a finality, though each counts its own doctrine as the last word of God.

Judaism and Mahometanism, each sets out from the alleged words of one man, which are made the only measure of truth for the whole human race. There can be no progress. The devotee of Judaism or Mahometansim must logically believe his form of religion perpetual: so if a man teach what is hostile to it, he must be put to death, though his doctrine be true.

Whatever is consistent with reason, conscience, and the religious faculty, is consistent with the Christianity of Jesus, all else is hostile; whoever obeys these three oracles is essentially a Christian, though he lived ten thousand years before Jesus, or living now, does not own his name. Let men improve in reason, conscience, heart, and soul, in what most becomes a man — they outgrow each form of worship; they pass by all that rests on historical things, signs, wonders, miracles, all that does not rest on the eternal God, ever acting in man; yet they are not the further from this Christianity, but all the nearer by the change. These things are left behind, as the traveller leaves the mire and stones of the road he travels, and shakes off the dust of his garments as he approaches some queenly city, throned amid the hills, and looks back with sorrow on the crooked way he has traversed, where others still drag their slow and lingering length along. Men must come to such Christianity when they come to real manly excellence.. This proposes no partial end, but an absolute object — the perfection of man, or oneness with God. Therefore it leaves men perfect freedom; the liberty that comes of obedience to the law of the spirit of life. Other forms of worship, ancient

and modern, confine men in a dungeon; make them think the same thought, and speak the same word, and worship in the same way; Jesus would leave them the range of the world, scope and verge enough. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; the liberty of perfect obedience: the largest liberty of the sons of God. Reason and love are hostile to every limited form of religion, which says, believe, believe; they welcome that religion of Jesus, which says, be perfect as God.

2. A second excellence is this: It is not a system of theological or moral doctrines, but a method of religion and life. It lays down no positive creed to be believed in; commands no ceremonial action to be done; it would make the man perfectly obedient to God, leaving his thoughts and actions for reason and conscience to govern. It widens the sphere of thought and life; it reaffirms some of the great religious truths implied in man's nature; shows their practical application and its result. A religious system, with its forms, and its ritual, lops off the sacred peculiarities of individual character; chains reason and fetters the will; seeks to unite men in arbitrary creeds and forms — where the union can be but superficial and worthless — and it lays stress on externals. This Christianity insists on rightness before God; ties no man down to worship in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem; on the first day of the week, or the last day; in the church or the fields; socially or in private; with a creed, ritual, priest, symbol, spoken prayer, or without these. It breaks every yoke, seen or invisible; bids men worship in love. It does not ask man to call himself a Christian, or his religion Christianity. It bids him be

perfect; never says to reason, thus far and no further; forbids no freedom of inquiry, nor wide reach of thought; fears nothing from the truth, or for it. It never encourages that cowardice of soul which dares not think, nor look facts in the face, but sneaks behind altars, texts, traditions, because they are of the fathers; that cowardice which counts a mistake of the apostles better than truth in you and me, and which reads both piety and common sense out of its church because they will not bow the knee nor say the creed. Christianity asks no man to believe the Old Testament, or the New Testament, the divine infallibility of Moses or Jesus, but to prove all things; hold fast what is good; do the will of the father; love man and God.

The method of such a Christianity is a very plain one. Obedience, not to that old teacher, or this new one; but to God, who filleth all in all, to his law written on the tablets of the heart. It exhorts men to a divine life, not as something foreign but as something native and welcome to man. It is the life of many systems of religion, theology, and practical morality, as the ocean has many waves and bubbles; but these are not Christianity more than a wreath of foam is the Atlantic.

3. It differs from others in its eminently practical character. It counts a manly life better than saying "Lord, Lord;" puts mercy before sacrifice, and pronounces a gift to man better than a gift to God. It dwells much on the brotherhood of men; annihilates national and family distinctions; all are sons of God, and brothers; Man is to love his brother as himself, and bless him, and thus serve God. It values man above all things. Is he poor, weak, ignorant, sinful,

it does not scorn him, but labors all the more to relieve the fallen. It sees the "archangel ruined" in the sickly servant of Sin. It looks on the immortal nature of man, and all little distinctions vanish. It bids each man labor for his brother, and never give over till ignorance, want, and sin are banished from the earth; to count a brother's sufferings, sorrows, wrongs, as our sufferings, sorrows, and wrongs, and redress them. It says, carry the truth to all. Before Jesus, the Greek, the Roman, and the Jew, went to other lands to learn their arts, customs, and laws, study their religion. Jesus sent his disciples to teach and serve; only Buddha and his followers had done it before.

This Christianity allows no man to sever himself from the race, making this world an inn for him to take his ease. It does nothing for God's sake, each good act for its own sake; sends the devotee from his prayers to make peace with his brother; does not rob a man's father to enrich God; nor fancy he needs any thing, sacrifice, creeds, fasts, or prayers. It makes worship consist in being good, and doing good; faith within and works without; the test of greatness the amount of good done. Thus it is not a religion of temples, days, ceremonies, but of the street, the fire-side, the field-side. Its temple is all space; its worship in spirit and truth; its ceremony a good life, blameless and beautiful; its priest the spirit of God in the soul; its altar a heart undefiled. It places duty above cant. It promises, as the result of obedience — oneness with God, and inspiration from him. It offers no substitute for this, for nothing can do the work of goodness and piety but goodness and piety. It offers no magic to wipe sin out of the soul, and insure the re-

wards of religion without sharing its fatigues; knows nothing of vicarious goodness. Its heaven is doing God's will now and forever; thus it makes no antithesis between this and the next life. It puts nothing between men and God; makes Jesus our friend not our master; a teacher who blesses, not a tyrant who commands us; a brother who pleads with us, not an attorney who pleads with God, still less a sacrifice for sins he never committed, and therefore could not expiate.

These are not the peculiarities oftenest insisted on, and taught as Christianity; it is not the mystery, the miraculous birth, the incarnation, the God-man, the miracles, the fulfilment of prophecy, the transfiguration, the atonement, the resurrection, the angels, the ascension, the "five points;"— other religions have enough of such things, Jesus had but little.

Notwithstanding the anticipation of the doctrines of Jesus centuries before him,— Christianity was a new thing; new in its spirit, proved new by the life it wakened in the world. Alas, such is not the Christianity of the churches at this day, nor at any day since the crucifixion; but is it not the Christianity of Christ, the one only religion, everlasting, ever blest? *

* See the Critical and Miscellaneous Writings of Theodore Parker; Boston, 1843, Art. I. and X. Sermons of Theism, Serm. III.–VI. Also, Relation between the Ecclesiastical Institutions and the Religious Consciousness of the American People; and Function of a Teacher of Religion.

CHAPTER VI

THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

Reverence and tradition have woven about Jesus such a shining veil, that with the imperfect and doubtful materials in our hands, it is not easy to determine in detail and with minuteness, the character that moved and lived among his fellow men, and commenced what may be called the Christian movement. The difficulty is twofold: to avoid traditional prejudice, and to get at the facts. Perhaps it is impossible to separate the pure fact from the legendary and mythological drapery that surrounds it. Besides, the Gospels pretend to cover but a few months of his active life. Still some conclusion may be reached. From Christianity we have separated the life and character of Jesus, that we might try the doctrine by absolute religion; it now remains to examine the life of the man by the standard himself has given.

I. *The Negative Side, or the Limitations of Jesus.*

It is apparent that Jesus shared the erroneous notions of the times respecting devils, possessions, and demonology in general; respecting the character of God, and the eternal punishment he prepares for the devil and his angels, and for a large part of mankind. If we may credit the most trustworthy of the Gospels he was profoundly in error on these important points, whereon absurd doctrines have still a most pernicious

influence in Christendom. But it would be too much to expect a man "about thirty years of age" in Palestine, in the first century, to have outgrown what is still the doctrine of learned ministers all over the Christian world.

He was mistaken in his interpretation of the Old Testament, if we may take the word of the Gospels. But if he supposed that the writers of the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Prophecies, spoke of him; if he applied their poetic figures to himself, it is yet but a trifling mistake, affecting a man's head not his heart. It is no more necessary for Jesus than for Luther to understand all ancient literature, and be familiar with criticism and antiquities; though with men who think religion rests on his infallibility, it must be indeed a very hard case for their belief in Christianity.

Sometimes he is said to be an enthusiast,* who hoped to found a visible kingdom in Judea, by miraculous aid — as the prophets had distinctly foretold their "Messiah" should do,— that he should be a king on earth, and his disciples also, not forgetting Judas, should sit on twelve thrones and judge the restored tribes; that he should return in the clouds. Certainly a strong case, very strong, may be made out from the synoptics to favor this charge. But what then? Even if the fact be admitted, as I think it must be, it does not militate with his morality and religion. How many a saint has been mistaken in such matters! His honesty, zeal, self-sacrifice, heavenly purity still shine out in the whole course of his life.†

* See in Eusebius, Demonstr. Evangel. Lib. III. C. 3, the noble passage of defending him from the charge, often brought of old time — of seducing the people.

† On this point see, who will, the charges against Jesus in the Wolfenbüttel, Fragmente; in the Writings of Wünsch, Bahrdt,

Another charge, sometimes brought against him, and the only one at all affecting his moral and religious character, is this: that he denounces his opponents in no measured terms; calls the Pharisees "hypocrites" and "children of the devil." We cannot tell how far the historians have added to the fierceness of this invective, but the general fact must probably remain, that he did not use courteous speech. We must judge a man by his highest moment. His denunciation of sleek, hollow Pharisees, say some, is certainly lower than the prayer, "Father, forgive them;" not consistent with the highest thought of humanity. But if such would consider the youth of the man, it were a very venial error — to make the worst of it. The case called for vigorous treatment. Shall a man say, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace? Sharp remedies are for inveterate and critical disease. It is not with honeyed words, neither then nor now, that great sins are to be exposed. It is a pusillanimous and most mean-spirited wisdom that demands a religious man to prophesy smooth things, lest indolence be rudely startled from his sleep, and the delicate nerves of sin, grown hoary and voluptuous in his hypocrisy, be smartly twitched. It seems unmanly and absurd to say a man filled with divine ideas should have no indignation at the world's wrong. Rather let it be said, No man's indignation should be like his, so deep, so uncompromising, but so holy and full of love. Let it be indignation: not personal spleen: call sin sin, sinners by their right name.

Yet in this general and righteous, though to some it

Paalzow, and Salvador. See also Hennel, ubi sup. Ch. XVI.; and, on the other hand, Reinhard's Plan of the Founder of Christianity; Andover, 1831, and Furness, ubi sup. passim [See p. 260], and Ullmann, Sündlosigkeit Jesu.

might seem too vehement, indignation against men when he speaks of them as a class and representatives of an idea, there is no lack of charity, none of love, when he speaks with an individual. He does not speak harshly to that young man who went away sorrowful, his great possessions on the one hand and the kingdom of heaven on the other; does not call Judas a traitor, and Simon Peter a false liar as he was; says only to James and John — ambitious youths — "They know not what they ask"; never addresses scornful talk to a Pharisee, or long-robed doctor of the law, Herodians or scribes, spite of their wide phylacteries, their love of uppermost seats, their devouring of widow's houses in private, their prayers and alms to be seen of men. He only states the fact, but plainly and strongly, to their very face. Even for these men his soul is full of affection. He could honor an Herodian; pray for a scribe; love even a Pharisee. It was not hatred, personal indignation, but love of men, which lit that burning zeal, and denounced such as sat in Moses' seat, boasting themselves children of Abraham, when they were children of the devil, and did his works daily — dutiful children of the father of lies. How he wailed like a child for the mother that bore him: "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee!" How he prayed like a mother for her desperate son, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Are these the words of one that could hate even the wickedest of the deceitful? Who then can love his fellow men?

II. *The Positive Side, or the Excellences of Jesus.*

In estimating the character of Jesus it must be remembered that he died at an age when a man has not reached his fullest vigor. The great works of creative intellect; the maturest products of man; all the deep and settled plans of reforming the world, come from a period, when experience gives a wider field as the basis of hope. Socrates was but an embryo sage till long after the age of Jesus. Poems and philosophies that live, come at a later date. Now here we see a young man, but little more than thirty years old, with no advantage of position; the son and companion of rude people; born in a town whose inhabitants were wicked to a proverb; of a nation above all others distinguished for their superstition, for national pride, exaltation of themselves and contempt for all others; in an age of singular corruption, when the substance of religion had faded out from the mind of its anointed ministers, and sin had spread wide among a people turbulent, oppressed, and downtrodden; a man ridiculed for his lack of knowledge, in this nation of forms, of hypocritical priests and corrupt people, falls back on simple morality, simple religion, unites in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages; rises free from so many prejudices of his age, nation, or sect; gives free range to the spirit of God in his breast; sets aside the law, sacred and time-honored as it was, its forms, its sacrifices, its temple and its priests; puts away the doctors of the law, subtle, learned, irrefragable, and pours out doctrines, beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and true as God. The philosophers, the poets, the prophets, the rabbis,— he rises above

them all. Yet Nazareth was no Athens, where philosophy breathed in the circumambient air; it had neither porch nor lyceum, not even a school of the prophets. Doubtless he had his errors, his follies, faults, and sins even; it is idle and absurd to deny it. But there was a divine manhood in the heart of this youth. Old teachers, past times, the dead letter of forms a century deceased, enslaved his fellow men, the great, the wise; what were they to him? Let the dead bury their dead. Men had reverence for institutions so old, so deep-rooted, so venerably bearded with the moss of age. Should not he, at least, with that sweet conservatism of a pious heart, sacrifice a little to human weakness, and put his zeal, faith, piety, into the old religious form, sanctified by his early recollections, the tender prayer of his mother, and a long line of saints? New wine must be put into new bottles, says the young man, triumphing over a sentiment, natural and beautiful in its seeming; triumphant where strife is most perilous, victory rarest and most difficult. The priest said, Keep the law and reverence the prophets. Jesus sums up the excellence of both, Love man and love God, leaving the chaff of Moses, and the husk of Ezekiel, with their "Thus-saith-the-Lord," to go to their own place, where the wind might carry them.

He looked around him and saw the wicked, men who had served in the tenth legion of sin, pierced with the lances and torn with the shot; men scarred and seamed all over with wounds dishonorably got in that service; men squalid with this hideous disease, their moral sense blinded, their nature perverse, themselves fallen from the estate of Godliness for which they were made, and unable, so they fancied to lift themselves up; men who called good evil, and evil good,— he bade them rise up

and walk, waiting no longer for a fancied redeemer that would never come. He told them they also were men; children of God, and heirs of heaven, would they but obey. So corrupt were they, there was no open vision for them: the voice of God was a forgotten sound in their bosoms. To them he said, I am the good Shepherd; follow me. At the sight of their penitence he says, Thy sins are forgiven thee: go, and sin no more. Is not penitence itself the forgiveness of sins, the dawn of reconciliation with God? He showed men their sin, the disease of the soul living false to its law; told them their salvation; bade them obey and be blessed.

He saw the oppressor, with his yoke and heavy burden for man's neck; the iron that enters the soul; men who were the corrupters, the bane, the ruin of the land; base men with an honorable front; low men, crawling, as worms, their loathsome track in high places; deceitful hucksters of salvation, making God's house of prayer a den of thieves, fair as marble without, but all rottenness within. What wonder if love, though the fairest of God's daughters, at sight of such baseness pours out the burning indignation of a man stung with the tyranny of the strong, ashamed at the patience of mankind; the word of a man fearless of all but to be false when truth and duty bid him speak? To call the whelp of sin a devil's child — is that a crime? Doubtless it is, in men stirred by passion; not in a soul filled to the brim and overflowing with love.

He looks on the nation, the children of pious Abraham; men for whom Moses made laws, and Samuel held the sceptre, and David prayed, and prophets admonished in vain, pouring out their blood as water;

men for whom psalmist and priest and seer and kings had prayed and wept in vain,— well might he cry, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem." Few heard his cries. That mightiest heart that ever beat, stirred by the spirit of God, how it wrought in his bosom! What words of rebuke, of comfort, counsel, admonition, promise, hope, did he pour out; words that stir the soul as summer dews call up the faint and sickly grass! What profound instruction in his proverbs and discourses; what wisdom in his homely sayings, so rich with Jewish life; what deep divinity of soul in his prayers, his action, sympathy, resignation! Persecution comes; he bears it; contempt, it is nothing to him. Persecuted in one city, he flees into another. Scribes and Pharisees say, He speaketh against Moses; he replies, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. They look back to the past, and say, We have Abraham to our father; he looks to the comforter, and says, Call no man your father on earth. They say, He eats bread with unwashed hands, plucks corn and relieves disease on the holy Sabbath day, when even God rested from his labors; he says, Worship the father in spirit and in truth. They look out to their law, its festivals, its Levites, its chief priests, the ancient and honorable of the earth, the temple and the tithe; he looks in to the soul, purity, peace, mercy, goodness, love, religion. The extremes meet often in this world. Comedy and tragedy jostle each other in every dirty lane. But here it was the flesh and the devil on one side, and the holy spirit on the other.

CHAPTER VII

MISTAKES ABOUT JESUS — HIS RECEPTION AND INFLUENCE

We often err in our estimate of this man. The image comes to us, not of that lowly one; the carpenter of Nazareth; the companion of the rudest men; hard-handed and poorly clad; not having where to lay his head; "who would gladly have stayed his morning appetite on wild figs, between Bethany and Jerusalem;" hunted by his enemies; stoned out of a city, and fleeing for his life. We take the fancy of poets and painters; a man clothed in purple and fine linen, obsequiously attended by polished disciples, who watched every movement of his lips, impatient for the oracle to speak. We conceive of a man who was never in sin, in error, or even in fear or doubt; whose course was all marked out before him, so that he could not miss the way. But such it was not, if the writers tell truly; nay, such it could not be. Did he say, I came to fulfill the law and the prophets, and it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one jot or tittle of the law to fail? Then he must have doubted, and thought often and with a throbbing heart, before he could say, I am not come to bring peace, but a sword; to light a fire, and would God it were kindled: many times before the fulness of peace dwelt in him, and he could say: The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship in spirit and in truth!

We do not conceive of that sickness of soul which must have come at the coldness of the wise men, the

heartlessness of the worldly, at the stupidity and selfishness of the disciples. We do not think how that heart, so sensitive, so great, so finely tuned, and delicately touched, must have been pained to feel there was no other heart to give an answering beat. We know not the long and bitter agony which went before the triumph-cry of faith, I am not alone, for the Father is with me; we do not heed that faintness of soul which comes of hope deferred, of aspirations all unshared by men, a bitter mockery, the only human reply, the oft-repeated echo to his prayer of faith. We find it difficult to keep unstained our decent robe of goodness when we herd only with the good and shun the kennel where sin and misery, parent and child, are huddled with their rags; we do not appreciate that strong and healthy pureness of soul which dwelt daily with iniquity, sat at meat with publicans and sinners, and yet with such cleanness of life as made even sin ashamed of its ugliness, but hopeful to amend. Rarely, almost never, do we see the vast divinity within that soul, which, new though it was in the flesh, at one step goes before the world whole thousands of years; judges the race; decides for us questions we dare not agitate as yet, and breathes the very breath of heavenly love. The Christian world, aghast at this venerable beauty in the flesh; transfixed with wonder as such a spirit rises in his heavenly flight, veils its face and says, It is a God; such thoughts are not for men; the life betrays the deity. And is it not the divine which the flesh enshrouds; to speak in figures, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person; the clear resemblance of the all-beautiful; the likeness of God in which man is made? But alas for us, we read our lesson backward; make a god of our brother, who

should be our servant and helper. So the new-fledged caglets may see the parent bird, slow rising at first with laborious efforts, then cleaving the air with sharp and steady wing, and soaring through the clouds, with eye undazzled, to meet the sun; they may say, We can only pray to the strong pinion. But anon, their wings shall grow, and flutter impatient for congenial skies and their parent's example guide them on. But men are still so sunk in sloth, so blind and deaf with sensuality and sin, they will not see the greatness of man in him, who, falling back on the inspiration God normally imparts, asks no aid of mortal men, but stands alone, serene in awful loveliness, not fearing the roar of the street, the hiss of the temple, the contempt of his townsmen, the coldness of this disciple, the treachery of that; who still bore up, had freest communion when all alone; was deserted, never forsaken; betrayed, but still safe; crucified, but all the more triumphant. This was the victory of the Soul: a Man of the highest type. Blessed be God that so much manliness has been lived out, and stands there yet, a lasting monument to mark how high the tides of divine life have risen in the human world. It bids us take courage, and be glad, for what man has done, he may do; yea more.

"Jesus, there is no dearer name than thine,
Which Time has blazoned on his mighty scroll;
No wreaths nor garlands ever did entwine
So fair a temple of so vast a soul.
There every Virtue set his triumph-seal;
Wisdom conjoined with Strength and radiant Grace,
In a sweet copy heaven to reveal,
And stamp perfection on a mortal face;
Once on the earth wert thou, before men's eyes,
That did not half thy beauteous brightness see;
E'en as the emmet does not read the skies,
Nor our weak orbs look through immensity.

Once on the earth wert thou, a living Shrine,
Wherein conjoining dwelt, the good, the lovely, the divine." *

Here was the greatest soul of all the sons of men; a man of genius for religion; one before whom the majestic mind of Grecian sages, and of Hebrew seers must veil its face. Try him as we try other teachers. They deliver their word, find a few waiting for the consolation, who accept the new tidings, follow the new method, and soon go beyond their teacher, though less mighty minds than he. Such is the case with each founder of a school in philosophy, each sect in religion. Though humble men, we see what Socrates and Luther never saw. But eighteen centuries have past since the tide of humanity rose so high in Jesus; what man, what sect, what church has mastered his noblest thought; comprehended his method, and fully applied it to life! Let the world answer in its cry of anguish. Men have parted his raiment among them; cast lots for his seamless coat; but that spirit which toiled so manfully in a world of sin and death; which did and suffered, and overcame the world,— is that found, possessed, understood? Nay, is it sought for and recommended by any of our churches?

But no excellence of aim; no sublimity of achievement could screen him from distress and suffering. The fate of all saviours was his — despised and rejected of men. His father's children "did not believe in him;" his townsmen "were offended at him," and said, "whence hath he this wisdom? Is not this the son of Joseph, the carpenter?" Those learned scribes who came all the way from Jerusalem to entangle him in his

[* By Theodore Parker himself.]

talk, could see only this, "He hath Beelzebub." "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" a conservative might ask. Some said, "He is a good man." "Ay," said others, but "He speaketh against the temple." The sharp-eyed Pharisees saw nothing marvellous in the case. Why not? They were looking for signs and wonders in the heavens; not sermons on the mount, and a "Wo-unto-you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites;" they looked for the son of David, a king, to rule over men's bodies, not the son of a peasant-girl, born in a stable, the companion of fishermen, the friend of publicans and sinners, who spoke to the outcast, brought in the lost sheep, and so ruled in the soul, his kingdom not of this world. They said, "He is a Galilean, and of course no prophet." If he called men away from the senses to the soul, they said, "He is beside himself." "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?" asked some one who thought the answer would settle the matter. When he said, if a man live by God's law, "he shall never see death," they exclaimed, those precious shepherds of the people, "Now we know thou hast a devil, and art mad. Abraham is dead, and the prophets! Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Who are you, sir?" What a faithful report would scribes and Pharisees and doctors of the law, have made of the Sermon on the Mount; what omissions and redundancies would they have not found in it; what blasphemy against Moses and the law, and the ark of the covenant, and the Urim and the Thummim, and the meat-offering and the new-moons; what neglect to mention the phylacteries, and the shewbread and the Levite, and the priest and the tithes, and the other great "essentials of religion;" what "infidelity" must these pious souls have detected!

How must they have classed him with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the mythological "Tom-Paines" of old time; with the men of Sodom and Gomorrah! The popular praise of the young Nazarene, with his divine life and lip of fire; the popular shout, "Hosannah to the Son of David," was no doubt "a stench in the nostrils of the righteous." "When the son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Find faith? He comes to bring it. It is only by crucified redeemers that the world is "saved." Prophets are doomed to be stoned; apostles to be sawn asunder. The world knoweth its own and loveth them. Even so let it be; the stoned prophet is not without his reward. The balance of God is even.

Yet there were men who heard the new word. Truth never yet fell dead in the streets; it has such affinity with the soul of man, the seed, however broadcast, will catch somewhere, and produce its hundred-fold. Some kept his sayings and pondered them in their hearts. Others heard him gladly. Did priests and Levites stop their ears? Publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before them. Those blessed women, whose hearts God has sown deepest with the orient pearl of faith; they who ministered to him in his wants, washed his feet with tears of penitence, and wiped them with the hairs of their head, was it in vain he spoke to them? Alas for the anointed priest, the child of Levi, the son of Aaron, men who shut up inspiration in old books, and believed God was asleep. They stumbled in darkness, and fell into the ditch. But doubtless there was many a tear-stained face that brightened like fires new stirred as truth spoke out of Jesus' lips. His words swayed the multitude as pendant vines swing in the summer wind; as the spirit of

God moved on the waters of chaos, and said, "Let there be light," and there was light. No doubt many a rude fisherman of Gennesareth heard his words with a heart bounding and scarce able to keep in his bosom, went home a new man, with a legion of angels in his breast, and from that day lived a life divine and beautiful. No doubt, on the other hand, Rabbi Kozeb Ben Shatan, when he heard of this eloquent Nazarene, and his Sermon on the Mount, said to his disciples in private at Jerusalem, This new doctrine will not injure us, prudent and educated men; we know that men may worship as well out of the temple as in it; a burnt-offering is nothing; the ritual of no value; the Sabbath like any other day; the Law faulty in many things, offensive in some, and no more from God than other laws equally good. We know that the priesthood is a human affair, originated and managed like other human affairs. We may confess all this to ourselves, but what is the use of telling of it? The people wish to be deceived; let them. The Pharisee will behave wisely like a Pharisee — for he sees the eternal fitness of things — even if these doctrines should be proclaimed. But this people, who know not the law, what will become of them? Simon Peter, James and John, those poor unlettered fishermen, on the lake of Galilee, to whom we gave a farthing and the priestly blessing in our summer excursion, what will become of them when told that every word of the law did not come straight out of the mouth of Jehovah, and the ritual is nothing! They will go over to the flesh and the devil, and be lost. It is true, that the law and the prophets are well summed up in one word, love God and man. But never let us sanction the saying; it would ruin the seed of Abraham,

keep back the kingdom of God, and destroy our usefulness.*

Thus went it at Jerusalem. The new word was "Blasphemy," the new prophet an "Infidel," "beside himself," had "a devil." But at Galilee, things took a shape somewhat different; one which blind guides could not foresee. The common people, not knowing the law, counted him a prophet come up from the dead, and heard him gladly. Yes, thousands of men, and women also, with hearts in their bosoms, gathered in the field and pressed about him in the city and the desert place, forgetful of hunger and thirst, and were fed to the full with his words, so deep a child could understand them; James and John leave all to follow him who has the word of eternal life; and when that young carpenter asks Peter, Whom sayest thou that I am? it has been revealed to that poor unlettered fisherman, not by flesh and blood, but by the word of the Lord, and he can say, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. The Pharisee went his way, and preached a doctrine that he knew was false; the fisherman also went his way, but which to the flesh and the devil? †

We cannot tell, no man can tell the feelings which the large free doctrines of such humane religion awakened when heard for the first time. There must have been many a Simeon waiting for the consolation; many a Mary longing for the better part; many a soul in cabins and cottages and stately dwellings, that caught glimpses of the same truth as God's light shone through some crevice which piety made in that wall prejudice and superstition had built up betwixt man

* Parker, Miscellanies, Art. VII.; and Speeches, Vol. I. Art. I.
† Parker, Miscellanies, Art. XI.

and God; men who scarce dared to trust that revelation —"too good to be true"— such was their awe of Moses, their reverence for the priest. To them the word of Jesus must have sounded divine; like the music of their home sung out in the sky, and heard in a distant land, beguiling toil of its weariness, pain of its sting, affliction of despair. There must have been men, sick of forms which had lost their meaning; pained with the open secret of sacerdotal hypocrisy; hungering and thirsting after the truth, yet whom error, and prejudice, and priestcraft had blinded so that they dared not think as men, nor look on the sunlight God shed upon the mind.

But see what a work it has wrought. Men could not hold the world in their bosoms; it would not be still. No doubt they sought — those rude disciples — after their teacher's death, to quiet the matter and say nothing about it; they had nerves which quivered at the touch of steel; wives and children whom it was hard to leave behind to the world's uncertain sympathy; respectable friends it may be, who said, The Old Law did very well; let well enough alone; the people must be deceived a little; the world can never be much mended! No doubt the truth stood on one side, and ease on the other; it has often been so. Perhaps the disciples went to the old synagogue more sedulous than before; paid tithes; kept the new-moons; were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice; made low bows to the Levite; sought his savory conversation, and kept the rules which a priest gave George Fox. But it would not do. There was too much truth to be hid. Even selfish Simon Peter has a cloven tongue of fire in his mouth, and he and the disciples go to

their work, the new word swelling in their laboring heart.*

Then came the strangest contest the world ever saw. On the one side was all the strength of the world — the Jews with their records, and the hand of Moses, David, and Esaias; "supernatural records," that go back to the birth of time; their law derived from Jehovah, attested by miracles, upheld by prophets, defended by priests, children of Levi, sons of Aaron, the law which was to last forever; the temple, forty and seven years in being built, its splendid ceremonies, its beautiful gate and golden porch; there was the wealth of the powerful; the pride, the self-interest, the prejudice of the priestly class; the indifference of the worldly; the hatred of the wicked; the scorn of the learned; the contempt of the great. On the same side were the Greeks, with their chaos of religion, full of mingled beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice, piety and lust, still more confounded by the deep mysteries of the priest, the cunning speculations of the sophist, the awful sublimity of the sage, by the sweet music of the philosopher and moralist and poet, who spoke and sung of man and God in strains so sweet and touching; there were rites in public; solemn and pompous ceremonies, processions, festivals, temples, games to captivate that wonderous people; there were secret mysteries, to charm the curious and attract the thoughtful; Greece, with her arts, her science, her heroes and her gods, her muse voluptuous and sweet. There too was Rome, the queen of nations, and conqueror of the world, who sat on her seven-hilled throne, and cast her net eastward and southward and north-

* See Sermon of the Relation of Jesus to his Age and the Ages, by Theodore Parker in Speeches, Vol. I. Art. I.

ward and westward, over tower and city and realm and empire, and drew them to herself, a giant's spoil; with a form of religion haughty and insolent, that looked down on the divinities of Greece and Egypt, of "Ormus and the Ind," and gave them a shelter in her capacious robe; Rome, with her practised skill; Rome, with her eloquence; Rome, with her pride; Rome, with her arms, hot from the conquest of a thousand kings. On the same side were all the institutions of all the world; its fables, wealth, armies, pride, its folly and its sin.

On the other hand, were a few Jewish fishermen, untaught, rude, and vulgar; not free from gross errors; despised at home, and not known abroad; collected together in the name of an enthusiastic young carpenter, who died on the gallows fancying himself the Messiah and that the world would perish soon — and whom they declared to be risen from the dead; — men with no ritual, no learning, no books, no brass in their purse, no philosophy in their mind, no eloquence on their tongue. A Roman sceptic might tell how soon these fanatics would fall out, and destroy themselves, after serving as a terror to the maids and a sport to the boys of a Jewish hamlet, and so that "detestable superstition" come to an end! A priest of Jerusalem, with his oracular gossip, could tell how long the Sanhedrim would suffer them to go at large, in the name of "that deceiver," whose body "they stole away by night!" Alas for what man calls great; the pride of prejudice; the boast of power. These fishermen of Galilee have a truth the world has not, so they are stronger than the world. Ten weak men may chain down a giant; but no combination of errors can make a truth or put it down; no army of the ignorant equals one man who

has the word of life. Besides, all the old truth in Judea, Greece, Rome, was an auxiliary to favor the new truth.

The first preachers of Christianity had false notions on many points; they were full of Jewish fables and technicalities; thought the world would soon end, and Jesus come back "with power and great glory." Peter would now and then lie to serve his turn; Paul was passionate, often one-sided, dogmatic, and mistaken; Barnabas and Mark could not agree. There was something of furious enthusiasm in all these come-outers. James thunders like a "Fanatic" or "Radical" at the rich man, not without cause; they soon had divisions and persecutions among themselves, foes in the new household of Christianity. But, spite of the follies or limitations of these earnest and manly Jews, a religious fire burned in their hearts; the word of God grew and prevailed. The new doctrine passes from its low beginnings on the Galilean lake, step by step, through Jerusalem, Ephesus, Antioch, Alexandria, Corinth, Rome, till it ascends the throne of the world, and kings and empires lie prostrate at its feet.* But alas, as it spreads it is corrupted also. Judaism, paganism, idolatry, mingle their feculent scum with the living stream, and trouble still more and further the water of Life.

Christianity came to the world in the darkness of the nations; they had outgrown their old form, and looked for a new. They stood in the shadow of darkness, fearing to go back, not daring to look forward; they groped after God. The piety and morality which Jesus taught and lived came to the nations as a beam of light shot into chaos; a strain of sweet music,— so

* Parker, Miscellanies, Art. I. and XI.

silvery and soft we know not we are listening,— to him who wanders on amid the uncertain gloom, and charms him to the light, to the river of God and the tree of life. It was the fulfilment of the prophecy of holy hearts, human religion, human morality, and above all things revealing the greatness of man.

It is sometimes feared that Christianity is in danger; that its days are numbered.* Of the Christianity of the churches, no doubt it is true. That child of many fathers cannot die too soon. It cumbers the ground. The errors which Jesus taught will also fall and die. But absolute religion, absolute morality, cannot perish; never till love, goodness, devotion, faith, reason, fail from the heart of man; never till God melts away and vanishes, and nothing takes the place of the all-in-all. Religion can no more be separated from the race than thought and feeling; nor absolute religion die out more than wisdom perish from among men. Man's words, thoughts, churches, fail and pass off like clouds from the sky that leave no track behind. But God's word can never change. It shines perennial like the stars. Its testimony is in man's heart. None can outgrow it; none destroy. For eighteen hundred years, this Christianity of Chirst has been in the world, to warn and encourage. Violence and cunning, allies of sin, have opposed. Every weapon learning could snatch from the arsenals of the past, or science devise anew, or pride, and cruelty, and wit invent, has been used by mistaken men to destroy this fabric. Not a stone has fallen from the heavenly arch of real religion;

* See Comte and Leroux, ubi sup, passim, and de Potter, Hist. Philosophique politique et critique du Christianisme; Bruxelles, 1838, Vol. I. Introd. § 1.

not a loophole been found where a shot could enter. But alas, vain doctrines, follies, absurdities, without count, have been piled against the temple of God, marring its beauteous shape. That religion continues to live, spite of the traditions, fables, doctrines wrapped about it — is proof enough of its truth. Reason never warred against love of God and man, never with the absolute religion, but always with that of the churches.* There is much destructive work still to be done, which scoffers will attempt, if wise religious men withhold the medicative hand.

Can man destroy Absolute Religion? He cannot with all the arts and armies of the world destroy the pigment that colors an emmet's eye. He may obscure the truth to his own mind. But it shines forever unchanged. So boys of a summer's day throw dust above their heads, to blind the sun; they only hide it from their blinded eyes.†

* Even M. de Potter wars only against Christianity "hierarchically organized." "Jesus and his principles of social equality, of universal brotherhood, are to him the meek, sublime manifestation of the moral man," ubi sup., Vol. I. p. ii.

† Parker, ubi sup., Art. VI. Of the Transient and Permanent in Christianity. See also Speeches and Occasional Sermons, Vol. I. Art. i. ii. xii. Sermons of Theism, etc., Serm. III.–VI.

BOOK IV

"No man would be so ridiculous as (since Columbus discovered the new world of America, as big as the old, since the enlarged knowledge of the North of Europe, the South and East of Asia and Africa, besides the new divisions, names, and inhabitants of the old parts), to forbid the reading of any more geography than is found in Strabo, or Mela; or, since the Portuguese have sailed to the Indias by the Cape of Good Hope, to admit of no other Indian commodities than what are brought on Camels to Aleppo; or if posterity shall find out the North-east or North-west way to Cathajo and China, or shall cut the Isthmus between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, will it be unlawful to use the advantage of such noble achievements? If any man love *acorns* since *corn* is invented, let him eat *acorns;* but it is very unreasonable he should forbid others the use of *wheat.* Whatever is *solid* in the writings of Aristotle, these new philosophers will readily embrace; and they that are most accused for affecting the *new,* doubt not but they can give as good an account of the *old philosophy* as their most violent accusers, and are probably as much conversant in Aristotle's writings, though they do not much value these small wares that are usually retailed by the generality of his interpreters." *A brief Account of the new sect of Latitudemen,* by G. B. Oxford, 1662, p. 13, 14.

BOOK IV.

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT TO THE GREATEST OF BOOKS, OR A DISCOURSE OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER I

POSITION OF THE BIBLE — CLAIMS MADE FOR IT — STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION

View it in what light we may, the Bible is a very surprising phenomenon. In all Christian lands, this collection of books is separated from every other, and called sacred; others are profane. Science may differ from them, not from this. It is deemed a condescension on the part of its friends, to show its agreement with reason. How much has been written by condescending theologians to show the Bible was not inconsistent with the demonstrations of Newton! Should a man attempt to reëstablish the cosmogonies of Hesiod and Sanchoniathon, to allegorize the poems of Anacreon and Theocritus as divines mystify the Scripture, it would be said he wasted his oil, and truly.*

This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as no other. The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land of temples and heroic deeds, has not half the influence of this Book

* See the recent literature relating to a Plurality of Worlds for another illustration.

from a nation alike despised in ancient and modern times. It is read of a Sunday in all the thirty thousand pulpits of our land. In all the temples of christendom is its voice lifted up, week by week. The sun never sets on its gleaming page. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar, and colors the talk of the street. The bark of the merchant cannot sail the sea without it; no ship of war goes to the conflict but the Bible is there! It enters men's closets; mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The affianced maiden prays God in Scripture for strength in her new duties; men are married by Scripture. The Bible attends them in their sickness; when the fever of the world is on them, the aching head finds a softer pillow if such leaves lie underneath. The mariner, escaping from shipwreck, clutches this first of his treasures, and keeps it sacred to God. It goes with the peddler, in his crowded pack; cheers him at eventide, when he sits down dusty and fatigued; brightens the freshness of his morning face. It blesses us when we are born; gives names to half Christendom; rejoices with us; has sympathy for our mourning; tempers our grief to finer issues. It is the better part of our sermons. It lifts man above himself; our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man, about awaking from this dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture and his eye grows bright; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the death-angel by the hand and bid farewell to wife, and babes, and home. Men rest on this their dearest hopes. It tells them of God, and of his blessed Son; of earthly duties and of heav-

enly rest. Foolish men find it the source of Plato's wisdom, and the science of Newton, and the art of Raphael; wicked men use it to rivet the fetters on the slave. Men who believe nothing else that is spiritual, believe the Bible all through; without this they would not confess, say they, even that there was a God.

Now for such effects there must be an adequate cause. That nothing comes of nothing is true all the world over. It is no light thing to hold, with an electric chain, a thousand hearts though but an hour, beating and bounding with such fiery speed. What is it then to hold the Christian world, and that for centuries? Are men fed with chaff and husks? The authors we reckon great, whose word is in the newspaper, and the market-place, whose articulate breath now sways the nation's mind, will soon pass away, giving place to other great men of a season, who in their turn shall follow them to eminence, and then oblivion. Some thousand "famous writers" come up in this century, to be forgotten in the next. But the silver cord of the Bible is not loosed, nor its golden bowl broken, as Time chronicles his tens of centuries passed by. Has the human race gone mad? Time sits as a refiner of metal; the dross is piled in forgotten heaps, but the pure gold is reserved for use, passes into the ages, and is current a thousand years hence as well as to-day. It is only real merit that can long pass for such. Tinsel will rust in the storms of life. False weights are soon detected there. It is only a heart that can speak, deep and true, to a heart; a mind to a mind; a soul to a soul; wisdom to the wise, and religion to the pious. There must then be in the Bible, mind, conscience, heart and soul, wisdom and religion. Were it otherwise, how could millions find it their law-

giver, friend, and prophet? Some of the greatest of human institutions seem built on the Bible; such things will not stand on heaps of chaff but mountains of rocks.

What is the secret cause of this wide and deep influence? It must be found in the Bible itself, and must be adequate to the effect. To answer the question we must examine the Bible, and see whence it comes, what it contains, and by what authority it holds its place. If we look superficially, it is a collection of books in human language, from different authors and times; we refer it to a place amongst other books and proceed to examine it as the works of Homer and Xenophon. But the popular opinion bids us beware, for we tread on holy ground. The opinion commonly expressed by the Protestant churches is this: The Bible is a miraculous collection of miraculous books; every word it contains was written by miraculous inspiration from God, which was so full, complete, and infallible, that the authors delivered the truth and nothing but the truth; that the Bible contains no false statement of doctrine or fact, but sets forth all religious and moral truth which man needs, or which it is possible for him to receive in, and no particle of error:— therefore that the Bible is the only authoritative rule of religious faith and practice.* To doubt this is reckoned a dan-

* It is scarce necessary to cite authorities to prove this statement, as it is a notorious fact. But see the most obvious sources, Westminster Catechism, Quest. 2; Calvin's Institutes, Book I. Ch. VI.–IX.; Knapp, ubi sup. § 1–13, especially Vol. I. p. 130, et seq. See also Gaussen's Theopneusty, or the plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, translated by E. N. Kirk; New York, 1842. The latter maintains that "all the written word is inspired of God even to a single iota or title," p. 333, and passim. See Musculus, Loci communes; ed. 1564, p. 178.

gerous error, if not an unpardonable sin. This is the supernatural view. Some scholars slyly reject the divine authority of the Old Testament. Others reject it openly, but cling strongly as ever to the New. Some make a distinction between the genuine and the spurious books of the New Testament; thus there is a difference in the less or more of an inspired and miraculous canon. The modern Unitarians have perhaps reduced the scripture to its lowest terms. But Protestants, in general, in America, agree that in the whole or in part the Bible is an infallible and exclusive standard of religious and moral truth. The Bible is master to the soul; superior to intellect; truer than conscience; greater and more trustworthy than the affections and the soul.

Accordingly, with strict logical consistency, a peculiar method is used both in the criticism and interpretation of the Bible; such as men apply to no other ancient documents. A deference is paid to it wholly independent of its intrinsic merit. It is presupposed that each book within the lids of the Bible has an absolute right to be there, and each sentence or word therein is infallibly true.* Reason has nothing to do

But see also Faustus Socinus, De Auctoritate Sac. Scrip. in Bibliotheca Fratrr. Polon. Vol. I.; Limborch, Theol. Lib. I.; Episcopius, Instit. P. IV.

* The writings of most of the early Unitarians are exceptions to this general rule. They attempted to separate the spurious from the genuine. See earlier numbers of the Christian Examiner, passim; Norton, Statement of Reasons, etc., p. 136, et seq. Evidences of the genuineness of the Gospels, Vol. I. p. liii. et seq. See especially p. lxi. Vol. II. p. cliv. clxii. cxiii. and the whole of the additional note on the O. T. p. xlviii., et seq.; Internal Evidences, etc. (1855), p. 13; and Translation of the Gospels (1855), Vol. II. note E. See also Stuart, Critical History and Defence of the O. T. Canon; Andover, 1845. Dr. Palfrey, ubi sup. denies the miraculous inspiration of all the Old Testament, except the last four books of Moses, and there diminishes its intensity.

in the premises, but accepts the written statement of "the Word;" the duty of belief is just the same whether the Word contradict reason and conscience, or agrees with them.*

This opinion about the Bible is true, or not true. If true it is capable of proof, at least of being shown to be probable. Now there are but four possible ways of establishing the fact, namely:—

1. By the authority of churches, having either a miraculous inspiration, or a miraculous tradition, to prove the illegal infallibility of the Bible. But the churches are not agreed on this point. The Roman Church very stoutly denies the fact, and besides, the Protestants deny the authority of the Roman Church.

2. By the direct testimony of God in our consciousness assuring us of the miraculous infallibility of the Bible. This would be at the best one miracle to prove another, which is not logical. The proof is only subjective, and is as valuable to prove the divinity of the Koran, the Shaster, and the book of Mormon, as that of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. It is the argument of the superstitious and enthusiastical.

3. By the fact that the Bible claims this divine infallibility. This is reasoning in a circle, though it is the method commonly relied on by Christians. It will prove as well the divinity of any impostor who claims it.†

4. By an examination of the contents of the Bible, and the external history of its origin. To proceed in

* See Gaussen, ubi, sup.; Horne, Introduction to the Holy Scriptures; Philad. 1840, Vol. I. p. 1–187.

† See this claim made in the Koran, Sales's translation, London, new edition, page 162, et seq. 206, 372, 400, 152, etc., 219, 127, et al., and the Book of Mormon (Nauvoo, 1840), passim.

this way, we must ask: Are all its statements infallibly true? But to ask this question presupposes the standard-measure is in ourselves, not in the Bible; so at the utmost the Book can be no more infallible, and have no more authority than reason and the moral sense by which we try it. A single mistake condems its infallibility, and of course its divinity. But the case is still worse. After the truth of a book is made out, before a work in human language like other books can be referred to God as its author, one of two things must be shown: either that its contents could not have come from man, and then it follows by implication that they came from God; or that at a certain time and place, God did miraculously reveal the contents of the book.

Now it is a notorious fact, first, that it has not been and cannot be proved, that every statement in the Bible is true; or, secondly, that its contents, such as they are, could not have proceeded from man, under the ordinary influence of God; or, finally, that any one book or word of the Bible was miraculously revealed to man. In the absence of proof for any one of these three points, it has been found a more convenient way to assume the truth of them all, and avoid troublesome questions.*

Laying aside all prejudices, if we look into the Bible in a general way, as into other books, we find facts which force the conclusion upon us, that the Bible is a human work, as much as the Principia of Newton or Descartes, or the Vedas and Koran. Some things are beautiful and true, but others, no man, in his reason,

* See some pertinent remarks in J. H. Thom's Life of Joseph Blanco White; London, 1845, Vol. I. p. 275, et seq.; Vol. II. p. 18, et seq., and the remarks of Mr. Norton, p. 250, et seq. De Wette, Wesen, § 6.

can accept. Here are the works of various writers, from the eleventh century before to the second century after Christ, thrown capriciously together, and united by no common tie but the lids of the bookbinder. Here are two forms of religion, which differ widely, set forth and enforced by miracles; the one ritual and formal, the other actual and spiritual; the one the religion of fear, the other of love; one final, and resting entirely on the special revelation made to Moses, the other progressive, based on the universal revelation of God, who enlightens all that come into the world; one offers only earthly recompense, the other makes immortality a motive to a divine life; one compels men, the other invites them. One half the Bible repeals the other half. The gospel annihilates the law; the apostles take the place of the prophets, and go higher up. If Christianity and Judaism be not the same thing, there must be hostility between the Old Testament and the New Testament, for the Jewish form claims to be eternal. To an unprejudiced man this hostility is very obvious. It may indeed be said Christianity came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them, and the answer is plain, their historic fulfilment was their destruction.

If we look at the Bible as a whole, we find numerous contradictions; conflicting histories which no skill can reconcile with themselves or with facts; poems which the Christians have agreed to take as histories, but which lead only to confusion on that hypothesis; prophecies that have never been fulfilled, and from the nature of things never can be.* We find stories of

* It is instructive to see that the Greeks sometimes regarded the writings of Homer with the same superstitious veneration which is often paid to the Bible. They found therein the

miracles which could not have happened; accounts which represent the laws of nature completely transformed, as in fairy-land, to trust the tales of the old romancers; stories that make God a man of war, cruel, capricious, revengeful, hateful, and not to be trusted. We find amatory songs, selfish proverbs, skeptical discourses, and the most awful imprecations human fancy ever clothed in speech. Connected with these are lofty thoughts of Nature, man and God: devotion touching and beautiful, and a most reverent faith. Here are works whose authors are known; others of which the author, age, and country are alike forgotten. Genuine and spurious works, religious and not religious are strangely mixed. But the subject demands a more minute and detailed examination in each of its main parts.

Neptunian and Vulcanian theory; the sphericity of the earth; the doctrines of Democritus, Heraclitus, and of Socrates and Plato in ther turn. See Heraclides Ponticus, Alleg. Hom. in Gale, ubi sup. p. 436, et seq., 488, et seq. Pausanias, IX. 41, p. 452, ed. Schubert, seriously urges the question whether any works from the Shop of Vulcan were then in existence. According to Aristotle (de Part. Animal. III. 10, p. 87, ed. Bekker), some concluded in his time that the human head could speak when separated from the body — and that on the authority of Homer, "*And while he speaks his head was mingled with the dust.*" Ilias. X. 427. Some quoted Homer to show that horses had spoken — as some divines quote Moses to prove the same of the ass.

CHAPTER II

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CLAIMS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO BE A DIVINE, MIRACULOUS, OR INFALLIBLE COMPOSITION

It is not possible to prove directly the divine and miraculous character of the Old Testament by showing that God miraculously revealed it to the writers thereof, for we do not know who were the writers of the greater part of the books; and when the authors are known, it is only by their own testimony, which we have no right to assume to be infallible. We have not the faintest direct evidence to show there was any thing miraculous in their composition. The indirect evidence may be reduced to two branches:— first that which shows that all the statements of the Old Testament are true, and second that which shows it contains statements of of the case, the former proposition cannot be proved, since many things treated of in the Bible are known to us by that book alone. To say they are true, is to assume the fact at issue. Besides, a true statement is not necessarily miraculous; if it were, the multiplication table of Pythagoras would be a divine and miraculous composition. The latter proposition has also its difficulty. How do we know its statements are above human apprehension? But suppose they are, how do we know they are true? These difficulties are insuperable. To assume the divinity of the Old Testament is quite as absurd as to assume the same for the next book that shall be printed; to declare it miraculous on account of the beautiful piety in some parts of

it, is as foolish as to make the same claim for the geometry of Euclid and the poems of Homer, on account of their great excellence; to admit this claim because made by some of the Jews, is no more wise than to admit the claims of the Zoroastrian records and the Sibylline oracles, and the religious books of all nations; then, among so many, one is of no value, for the very excellence of a miraculous work is thought to consist in the fact of its being the only miraculous work.

To leave these assumptions and come to facts, this general thesis may be laid down, and maintained: Every book of the Old Testament bears distinct marks of its human origin; some of human folly and sin; all of human weakness and imperfection. If this thesis be true, the Bible is not the direct work of God; not the master of the mind and conscience, heart and soul of man. To prove this proposition, it is necessary to go into some details. The Hebrews divided their scriptures into the law, the prophets, and the writings, to each of which they assigned a peculiar degree of inspiration. The law was infallibly inspired, God speaking with Moses face to face; the prophets less perfectly, God addressing them by visions and dreams; the writings still more feebly, God communicating to their authors by figures and enigmas.* This ancient division may well enough be followed in this discussion.

I. *Of the Law.*

This comprises the first five books of the Bible. They are commonly ascribed to Moses; but there is no

* See Philo, De Monarch. I. p. 820. De Vita Mosis, III. p. 681, II. p. 656, et seq. Josephus, Cont. Apion, I. 8.

proof that he wrote a word of them. Only the Decalogue, in a compendious form, and perhaps a few fragments, can be referred to him with much probability. From the use of peculiar words, from local allusions, and other incidental signs, it is plain here are fragments from several different writers, who lived no one knows when or where, their names perfectly unknown to us. They all bear marks of an age much later than that of Moses, as any one familiar with ancient history, and free from prejudice, may see on examination.*

But if they were written by Moses, we are not, on the bare word of a writer, to admit the miraculous infallibility of his statements. Besides, the character of the books is such that a very high place is not to be assigned them among human compositions, measured by the standard of the present day. The first chapter of Genesis, if taken as a history, in the unavoidable sense of its terms, is at variance with facts. It relates that God created the sun, moon, stars, and earth, and gave the latter its planets, animals, and men, in six days; while science proves that many thousands, if not millions of years must have passed between the creation of the first plants, and man, the crown of creation; that the surface of the earth gradually received its present form, one race of plants after the other sprang up, animals succeeded animals, the simpler first, then the more complex, and at last came man. This chapter tells of an ocean of water above our heads, separated from us by a solid expanse, in which the greater and lesser lights are fixed; that there was evening and morning, before

* The proofs of this assertion cannot be adduced in a brief discourse like the present; see thereon de Wette, Introduction to the O. T. tr. by Theo. Parker, Vol. II. § 138, et seq.

there was a sun to cause the difference between day and night; that the sun and stars were created after the earth, for the earth's convenience; and that God ceased his action, and rested on the seventh day and refreshed himself. Here the Bible is at variance with science, which is nature stated in exact language. Few men will say directly what the schoolmen said to Galileo, "If nature is opposed to the Bible then nature is mistaken, for the Bible is certainly right;" but the popular view of the Bible logically makes that assertion. Truth and the book of Genesis cannot be reconciled, except on the hypothesis that the Bible means any thing it can be made to mean,* but then it means nothing.

A similar decision must be pronounced upon many accounts in the Law,— on the creation of woman; the story of the garden, the temptation and fall of man; the appearance of God in human shape, eating and drinking with his favorite, and making covenants; the story of the flood and the ark; the miraculous birth of

* See Augustine, Confessiones, Lib, XII. C. 18, et al. See in Whewell's Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences; Lond., 1840, Vol. II. p. 137, et seq. the remarkable chapter on "the Relation of Tradition to Palæontology." He thinks the interpretation of the Scriptures ought to change to suit the advance of physical science; and quotes, approvingly, the celebrated expression of Bellarmine: "When a demonstration shall be found to establish the Earth's motion, it will be proper to interpret the Sacred Scriptures otherwise than they have hitherto been interpreted in those passages where mention is made of the stability of the Earth and movement of the Heavens." Thus he makes the interpretation of the Bible purely arbitrary: you can interpret *into* it, or *out of* it, what you will. If you may so deal with the Bible why not with Homer, Plato, Milton, and Hobbes? In fact, the sound interpretation of the Bible is no more arbitrary than that of Lyttleton's Tenures, and that of nature itself.

Isaac; the promise to the patriarchs; the great age of mankind; the tower of Babel and confusion of tongues; the sacrifice of Isaac; the history of Joseph; of Moses; the ten plagues miraculously sent; the wonderful passage of the Red Sea; the support of the Hebrews in the wilderness on manna; the miraculous supply of food, water, and clothing, and the delivery of the Law at Mount Sinai.* On these it is needless to dwell. But there is one account in the Law too significant to be passed over. It is briefly this.† As the Jews approached the land of Canaan, Moses sent twelve men, "heads of the children of Israel," to examine the land, and report to the people. They spent a long time in their tour, reported that the land was fertile, exhibited specimens of its productions, but added, it was full of warlike nations. The Jews were afraid to invade it; "They wept all night and said, would God we had died in the land of Egypt." They rebelled, and wished to choose a leader and return. Moses and Aaron, and Caleb and Joshua — two of the twelve messengers — urge them to battle, and say, "Jehovah is with us." The people refuse, and would stone them. Then the glory of Jehovah appeared before the face of the people, and God says to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? . . . I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." But Moses, more merciful than his God, attempts to appease the Deity, and that by an appeal to his vanity; "And Moses said unto Jehovah, then the Egyptians

* See Geddes, Critical Remarks on the Hebrew Scriptures; Lond., 1800; Holy Bible, etc., etc. See some valuable remarks in Palfrey, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 133. Norton, Vol. II. Note D.

† Numbers, XIV.

shall hear of it, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. . . . Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations will speak, saying, because Jehovah was not able to bring this people into the land he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them." Then he proceeds to soothe his Deity; "Pardon the iniquity of this people;" "Jehovah is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty." Jehovah consents, but adds, "As truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah," but "because all these men . . . have tempted me now the ten times, . . . surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, . . . your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, . . . in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

If an unprejudiced Christian were to read this for the first time in a heathen writer, and it was related of Kronos or Moloch, he would say, what foul ideas those heathens had of God; thank Heaven we are Christians, and cannot believe in a deity so terrible. It is true there are now pious men, who believe the story to the letter, profess to find comfort therein, and count it part of their Christianity to believe it. But is God angry with men; passionate, revengeful; offended because they will not war, and butcher the innocent? Would he violate his perfect law and by a miracle destroy a whole nation, millions of men, women and children, because they fall into a natural fit of despair, and refuse to trust ten witnesses rather than two witnesses? Does God require man's words to restrain his rage, violence, and a degree of fury which Nero and Caracalla, butchers of men though they were, would have shuddered to

think of? Is he to be teased and coaxed from murder? Are we called on to believe this in the name of Christianity? Then perish Christianity from the face of earth, and let man learn of his religion and his God from the stars and the violet, the lion and the lamb. View this as the savage story of some oriental who attributed a bloodthirsty character to his God, and made a deity in his own image, and it is a striking remnant of barbarism that has passed away, not destitute of dramatic interest; not without its melancholy moral. There are some things which may be true, but must be rejected for lack of evidence to prove them true; but this story no amount of evidence could make credible.

Throughout the whole of the law, fact and fiction, history and mythology, are so intimately blended, that it seems impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends. The laws are not perfect; they contain a mingling of good and bad, wise and absurd, and if men will maintain that God is their author, we must still apply to them the words which Ezekiel puts in his mouth:* "I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;" or say with Jeremiah, "I spake not unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings, or sacrifices."

II. *Of the Prophets.*

The Hebrews divide the prophets into the earlier and the later: the first including the four historical works of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and the Kings; the second, the prophets properly so called, with the exception of Daniel, the three major, the twelve minor prophets.

* Ezekiel, Ch. XX. 25, Jer. VII.. 22.

1. *Of the Early Prophets.*

No one knows the date or the author of any one of those books; they all contain historical matter of doubtful character, such as the miraculous passage of the Jordan; the destruction of Jericho; the standing still of the sun and moon at the command of Joshua; the story of Samson; the destruction of the Benjamites; the birth and calling of Samuel; the wonders wrought by the Ark; the story of Saul, David, and Goliath, the miraculous pestilence, of Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, and others. Of all these, perhaps the story of Samson is the most strikingly absurd,— a man of miraculous birth and miraculous strength, whose ability lay in his long hair and which went from him when his locks were shorn off. When we read in Hesiod and elsewhere, the birth and exploits of Hercules,— who bears a resemblance to Samson in some respects, though vastly his superior on the whole — we refer the tale to human fancy in a low stage of civilization; a mind free from prejudice will do the same with the story of Samson,* No one can reasonably contend that it requires a mind miraculously enlightened to produce such books as these of the early prophets. They belong to the fabulous period of Jewish history. Mythology, poetry, fact, and fiction, are strangely woven together. The authors, whoever they were, claim no inspiration. However, as a general rule, they contain less to offend a religious mind than the books of the law.

2. *The Prophets, properly so called.*

It may be said of these writings, in general, that they contain nothing above the reach of human facul-

* See Palfrey, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 194, et seq., and on these books in general, p. 134–300. Horne, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 216, et seq.

ties. Here are noble and spirit-stirring appeals to men's conscience, patriotism, honor and religion; beautiful poetic descriptions, odes, hymns, expressions of faith, almost beyond praise. But the mark of human infirmity is on them all, and proofs or signs of miraculous inspiration are not found in them. In the minor prophets, there is nothing worthy of special notice in this place, unless it be the story of Jonah, which is unique in the ancient Hebrew literature, and tells its own tale.* These books do not require a detailed examination.† The greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, are more important, and require a more minute notice. In these, as well as in other prophetical books, and the Law, claim is apparently made to miraculous inspiration. "Thus saith Jehovah," is the authority to which the prophet appeals, "Jehovah said unto me," "The command of Jehovah came unto me," "I saw in a vision," "The spirit of Jehovah came upon me." These and similar expressions occur often in the prophets. But do these phrases denote a claim to miraculous inspiration as we understand it? We limit miraculous inspiration to a few cases, where something is to be done above human ability. Not so the Hebrews; they did not make a sharp distinction between the miraculous and the common. All religious and moral power was regarded as the direct gift of God; an outpouring of his spirit. God teaches David

* Pausanias says he saw dolphin carry a boy on his back as a recompense for being healed of a wound by the boy! Lib. III. C. 25, p. 573. A man who should believe such a story on such evidence would be thought not a little credulous by the men who declare it dangerous to doubt the stories in Jonah and Daniel. See too Pausanias, Lib. I. C. 44, § 8, and X. C. 13, § 10.

† For this, see De Wette, Introd. Vol. II., and Palfrey, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 362, et seq.

to fight; commands Gideon to select his soldiers, to arise in the night and attack the foe. The Lord set his enemies to fight amongst themselves. He teaches Bezaleel and Aholiab. They, and all the ingenious mechanics, are filled with "the spirit of God." The same "spirit of the Lord" enables Samson to kill a lion and many men. These instances show with what latitude the phrase is used, and how loose were the notions of inspiration.* The Greeks also referred their works to the aid of Phœbus, Pallas, Vulcan, or Olympian Jove, in the same way.

It has never been rendered probable that the phrase, Thus saith the Lord, and its kindred terms, were understood by the prophets or their hearers to denote any miraculous agency in the case. They employ language with the greatest freedom. Thus a writer says, "I saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; above it stood the seraphim." No thinking man would suppose the prophet designed to assert a fact, or that his countrymen understood him to do so. Certainly it is insulting to suppose a philosophic man would believe God sat on a throne, with a troop of courtiers around him, like a Persian king. When a prophet says Jehovah appeared to him in a dream, he can only mean, either he dreamed Jehovah appeared, which is somewhat different, or that he chose this symbolic way of stating his opinion. Thus a Grecian prophet might say, "The muse came down from high Olympus' shaggy top, and whispered unto me, her favorite son." † Not stating a fact, he

* See Glassius, Philologia sacra ed. Dathe, Vol. II. p. 815, et seq. Bauer, Theologie des A. T. § 51–54, et al.

† See Cicero, De Nat. Deorum, Lib. I. ch. I. and II. Ovid, Metamorph. Lib. II. 640, et seq.

would give an outness to what passed in his mind. However, if these writers claimed miraculous inspiration ever so strongly, we are not to grant it unless they abide the test mentioned above.

If they utter predictions — which they rarely attempt — we are not to assume their fulfilment, and then conclude the prophet was miraculously inspired, common as the method is. But what is the value of the claim made for them? Has any one of them ever uttered a distinct, definite, and unambiguous prediction of any future event that has since taken place, which a man without a miracle could not equally well predict? It has never been shown. Most of the prophetic writings relate to the past and the present; to the political, civil, and moral condition of the people, at the time; they exhort backsliding Israel to forsake his idols, return to Jehovah, live wisely and well. They state the result of obedience or of disobeying, for individuals and the nation. It is rare they predict distinctly and definitely any specific event; sometimes they foretell, in the most general terms, good or ill fortune, the destruction of a city, the defeat of an army, the downfall of a king. But in case the prediction came to pass, who shall tell us, at this distance of time, that it was not either a lucky hit, or the result of sagacious insight? Certainly the supposition is against a miracle. The Tripod of Delphi delivered some oracles that were extraordinarily felicitous; Seneca made a very clear prediction of the discovery of America, and Lactantius of the rise and downfall of Napoleon, and Lotichius of the capture of Magdeburg. Does the fulfilment prove the miraculous inspiration of the oracle in these cases?*

* See De Wette, ubi sup. Vol. II. § 201, et seq.

But to recur to the other test, there are statements in the prophets which are not true; predictions that did not come to pass. Under this rubric may be placed three of the most celebrated oracles in the Old Testament.

1. *Jeremiah's Prediction of the Seventy Years of Exile.*

It was an easy thing in Jeremiah's position to see that the little nation of Judea could not hold out against the Babylonian forces, and therefore must experience the common fate of nations they conquered, and be carried into exile.* But would the Lord forsake his people; the seed of Abraham? A pious Jew could not believe it. It was unavoidable, with the common opinion of his countrymen, that he should expect their subsequent restoration. But why predict an exile of just seventy years, unless miraculously directed? † He may have used that term for an indefinite period; a common practice. In that case there is no miracle. But on the other hand, if he predicted an exile of just seventy years, the oracle was a failure. The people were not carried into captivity all at once. From which of the two or three times of deportation shall we set out? The books of Kings and Chronicles differ somewhat.‡ But to take the chronology of Jeremiah himself, if the passage be genuine; § the deportation began in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar,

* On this custom of the Chaldees, see Heeren, Ideen, Vol. I. Gesenius On Isa. XXXVI. 16.

† Jer. XXV.

‡ See 2 Kings, XXIV. XXV. 2 Chron. XXXVI.

§ Jer. LII. 28–30; but see verses 4–15. See the forced combinations in Jahn's Hebrew Commonwealth, ch. V. § 43.

599 before Christ; it was continued in the year 588, and concluded in 583. The exile ended in the year 536. The longest period that can be made out extends to but sixty-three, and the shortest to but forty-seven years. To make out the seventy years we must date arbitrarily from the year 606.

2. *Ezekiel's Oracle against Tyre.*

This prophet predicts that Nebuchadnezzar shall destroy Tyre.* The prediction is clear and distinct; the destruction is to be complete and total. "With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets; he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrison shall go down to the ground. . . . I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built up no more." But it was not so. Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to raise the siege after investing the city for thirteen years, and go and fight the Egyptians. Then sixteen years after the first oracle, Ezekiel takes back his own words: "The word of the Lord came unto me saying, son of man, Nebuchadnezzar . . . caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus; every head was made bald," with the chafing of the helmet, "every shoulder was peeled," with the pressure of burdens; "yet he had no wages, nor his army from Tyrus. . . . Therefore, behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar." †

These things speak for themselves, and show the nature of the prophetic discourses; that they were

* Ezekiel XXVI. 1, et seq.

† XXIX. 17, et seq. See Isaiah, XXIII. and Gesenius's remarks, in his Commentar. Vol. I. p. 711, et seq. Rosenmüller, Alterth. Vol. II. Pt. I. p. 34.

moral addresses, or poetical odes. Ezekiel's celebrated prediction of an impossible city,* is a standing monument of the prophetic character, and of the lasting folly of interpreters. It were easy to collect other instances of palpable mistake.†

3. *The alleged Predictions of Jesus as the Messiah.*

The Messianic prophecies are the most famous of all. It is commonly pretended that there are in the Old Testament clear and distinct predictions of Jesus of Nazareth. But I do not hesitate to say, it has never been shown that there is, in the whole of the Old Testament, one single sentence that in the plain and natural sense of the words foretells the birth, life, or death of Jesus of Nazareth. If the Scripture have seventy-two senses, as one of the Rabbins declares, or if it foretells whatever comes to pass, as Augustine has said, and means all it can be made to mean, as many moderns seem to think, why predictions and types of Jesus may be found in the first chapter of Genesis, in Noah and Abraham and Samson, as well as in Virgil's fourth Eclogue, the Odes of Horace, and the story of the Trihemerine Hercules.

The Messianic expectations and prophecies seem to have originated in this way: After the happy and successful period of David and Solomon, the kingdom was divided into Judah and Israel, the two tribes and the ten, the national prosperity declined. Pious men

* Ch. XL.–XLVIII.

† On the Prophecies in general, see the Essay of Prof. Stuart, in Bib. Rep. Vol. II. p. 217, et seq.; of Hengstenberg, ibid. p. 139, et seq. Noyes in Christian Examiner, Vol. XVI. p. 321, et seq. See also the able essay of Knobel, Prophetismus der Hebräer, Vol. I. Einleit.

hoped for better times; they naturally connected these hopes with a personal deliverer; a descendant of David, their most popular king. The deliverer would unite the two kingdoms under the old form. A poetic fancy endowed him with wonderful powers; made him a model of goodness. Different poets arrayed their expected hero in imaginary drapery to suit their own conceptions. Malachi gives him a forerunner. The Jews were the devoutest of nations; the popular deliverer must be a religious man. They were full of pious faith; so the darker the present, the brighter shone the Pharos of Hope in the future. Sometimes this deliverer was called the Messiah; this term is not common in the Old Testament, however, but is sometimes applied to Cyrus by the Pseudo-Isaiah.*

These hopes and predictions of a deliverer involved several important things: A reunion of the divided tribes; a return of the exiles; the triumph and extension of the kingdom of Israel, its external duration and perfect happiness; idolatry was to be rooted out; the nations improved in morals and religion; truth and righteousness were to reign; Jehovah to be reconciled with his people; all of them were to be taught of God; other nations were to come up to Jerusalem, and be blesesd. But the Mosaic Law was to be eternal; the old ritual to last forever; Jerusalem to be the capital of the Messianic kingdom, and the Jewish nation to be reëstablished in greater pomp than in the times of David. Are these predictions of Jesus of Nazareth? He was not the Messiah of Jewish expectation and of

* Many chapters of Isaiah have been shown to be spurious. The passages, Chapters XLI.–LXVI.; XIII. XIV.; XXIII.–XXVII.; XXXIV. XXXV., are of this character.

the prophets' foretelling. The furthest from it possible. The predictions demanded a political and visible kingdom in Palestine, with Jerusalem for its capital, and its ritual the old law. The kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. The ten tribes — have they come back to the home of their fathers? They have perished and are swallowed up in the tide of the nations, no one knowing the place of their burial. The kingdom of the two tribes soon went to the ground. These are notorious facts. The Jews are right when they say, their predicted Messiah has not come. Does the Old Testament foretell a suffering Saviour, his kingdom not of this world; crucified; raised from the dead? The idea is foreign to the Hebrew Scriptures. Well might a Jew ask, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" To trust the uncertain record of the New Testament, Jesus was slow to accept the name of the Messiah; he knew the "people would take him by force and make him a king." But what means the triumphal entry into Jerusalem? He forbids his disciples to speak of his Messiahship: "See that thou tell no man of it;" lets John draw his own inference, whether or not he must "look for another;" thinks Simon Peter could only find it out by inspiration. Was it that he knew he was not the Messiah of the prophets, and so never formally assumed the title; but knowing that he was a true deliverer, far greater than their impossible Messiah, first suffered the name to be affixed to him, and then made the most of the popular idea? Or, was he himself mistaken? It concerns us little; but this remains, that he was much more than the Jews looked for. The Jewish Christians mistook the matter; Paul would prove that he was the Messiah of the prophets. Mistakes in theology, like

bits of glass in a kaleidoscope, are repeated again and again, in fantastic combinations.*

III. *The Writings.*

Under this head are comprised the remaining books of the Old Testament. Here is the dramatic poem of Job, a work of surprising beauty, and full of truth. But its author denies the immortality of the soul, and though he attempts "to justify the ways of God to man," he yet leaves the question as undecided as he found it.

In the Psalms we have beautiful prayers, mixed up with their local occasions; penitential hymns, songs of praise, expressions of hope, faith, trust in God, that have never been surpassed. The devotion of some of these sweet lyrics is beyond praise. But at the same time here are the most awful denunciations that speech ever spoke. In the following passage the writer denounces his enemies.† "Set thou a wicked man over him. Let Satan stand at his right hand; when he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg. . . . Let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children." These are the words of a man angry

* See De Wette, Dogmatik, § 137–142. Opuscula, I. p. 23–31; the numerous Christologies of modern times, and the introductions to the Old Testament. See also Strauss, Life of Jesus, § 60–68. Hennell, ubi sup. Chap. I. II. and XII. XIII.; Bretschneider, Dogmatik, § 30, 34 (p. 356, et seq.), § 137 (p. 166, et seq.). Hahn, Knapp, Hase, Wegscheider, etc., and Hengstenberg's Christology.

† Ps. CIX. 6, et seq. See also Ps. CXXXVII.

and revengeful. The Psalms abound with similar imprecations. To maintain they came directly from the God of love is to forget reason, conscience, and religion, which teach us to love our enemies, to pray for them that persecute us.

The book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs speak for themselves, and neither need nor claim any more inspiration than other collections of proverbs or oriental amatory idyls. The latter belongs to the same class with the writings of Anacreon. The somewhat doubtful book of Ecclesiastes seems to be the work of a sceptic. He denies the immortality of the soul with great clearness; thinks wisdom and folly are alike vanity. Though he concludes most touchingly in praise of virtue on the whole, and declares the fear of God, and keeping his commandments is the whole duty of man, yet this conclusion is vitiated by the former precept, "Be not righteous overmuch." The Lamentations of Jeremiah have as little claim to inspiration.*

The historical books of this division present some peculiarities. Ezra and Nehemiah are valuable historical documents, though implicit faith is by no means to be placed in them. The book of Esther is entirely devoid of religious interest, and seems to be a romance designed to show that the Jews will always be provided for. The brief book of Ruth may be an historical or a fictitious work.

The book of Daniel is a perfect unique in the Old Testament. It professes to have been written by a captive Jew, at Babylon, in the beginning of the sixth

* See Leclerc's Five Letters concerning the Inspiration, etc.; London, 1690, and on the other hand, William Lowth's Vindication of the Divine Authority, etc.; Lond., 1699, and Gaussen, Horne, and Stuart, ubi sup.

century before Christ; it contains accounts of surprising miracles, dreams, visions, men cast into a den of lions and a furnace of fire, yet escaping unhurt; a man transformed to a beast and eating grass like an ox for some years, and then restored to human shape; a miraculous and spectral hand writing on the palace wall; grotesque fancies that remind us of the Arabian Nights, and the Talmud.* To judge from internal evidence, it was written in the first part of the second century, perhaps about one hundred and eighty-seven years before Christ, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. The author seems to have a political and moral end in view, and to write for the encouragement of his countrymen, perhaps designing his work should pass for what it is, a politico-religious romance.†

All of these books hitherto mentioned seem written by earnest men, with no intention to deceive. Their manly honesty is everywhere apparent. But the book of Chronicles is of a very different character. Here is an obvious attempt on the writer's part to exalt the character of orthodox kings, and depress that of heretical kings; to bring forward the Priests and the Levites, and give everything a ceremonial appearance. This design will be obvious to any one who reads the stories in Chronicles, and then turns to the parallel passages in Samuel and Kings.‡ To take but a single instance: the writer of the book of Samuel gives an account of David; tells of his good and evil qualities; does not pass over his cruelty, nor extenuate his sin. But in

* See De Wette, Vol. II. § 257, p. 505, note *a*, and Pliny, VIII. 34.

† See De Wette, Vol. II. § 253, et seq.

‡ The passages are conveniently arranged for this purpose, side by side, in Jahn's edition of the Hebrew Bible. De Wette, § 189, et seq.

Chronicles there is not a word of this: nothing of the crime of imperial adultery; nothing of Nathan's rousing apologue, and Thou-art-the-man. The thing speaks for itself.

Now if these books have any divine authority, what shall we do with such contradictions; deny the fact? We live too long after Dr. Faustus for so easy a device. Shall we say, with a modern divine, the true believer will accept both statements with the same implicit faith? This also may be doubtful.

To look back upon the field we have passed, it must be confessed that the claims made for the Old Testament have no foundation in fact; its books, like others, have a mingling of good and evil. We see a gradual progress of ideas therein, keeping pace with the civilization of the world. Vestiges of ignorance, superstition, folly, of unreclaimed selfishness, yet linger there. Fact and fiction are strangely blended; the common and miraculous, the divine and the human run into one another. We find rude notions of God in some parts, though in others the more lofty. Here, the moral and religious sentiment are insulted; there, is beautiful instruction for both. Human imperfections meet us everywhere in the Old Testament. The passions of man are ascribed to God. The Jews had a mythology as well as the Greeks: they transform law into miracles; earth into a dream-land; it rains manna for eight and thirty years, and the smitten rock pours out water. We see a gradual progress in this as in all mythologies: first, God appears in person; walks in the garden in the cool of the day; eats and drinks; makes contracts with his favorites; is angry, resentful, sudden and quick in quarrel, and changes his plans at the ad-

vice of a cool man. Then it is the Angel of God who appears to man. It is deemed fatal for man to see Jehovah. His messenger comes to Manoah, and vanishes in the flame of the sacrifice; the angel of Jehovah appears to David. Next it is only in dreams, visions, types, and symbols that the Most High approaches his children. He speaks to them by night; comes in the rush of thoughts, but is not seen. The personal form, and the visible angel, have faded and disappeared as the daylight assumed its power. The nation advanced; its religion and mythology advanced with it. Then again, sometimes God is represented as but a local deity; Jacob is surprised to find him in a foreign land; next he is only the God of the Hebrews. At last, the ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD.

There is a similar progress in the notions of the service God demands. Abraham must offer Isaac; with Moses, slain beasts are sufficient; Micah has outgrown the Mosiac form in some respects, and says, "Shall Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams; shall I give the first-born of my body for the sin of my soul? what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" A spiritual man in the midst of a formal people saw the pure truth which they saw not. Does the Old Testament claim to be master of the soul? By no means; it is only a phantom conjured up by superstition that scares us in our sleep. Does the truth it contains make it a miraculous book? It is poor logic which thinks what is *false* can cease to be false, though never so many wonders are wrought in its defense.*

* On the Old Testament, its authors' inspiration, etc., see some valuable remarks in Spinoza, Tract. theol. polit. Ch. I.–X.

XII. XIII. See Norton, Vol. II. Append. D. and his Letter to Blanco White in Thom, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 250, et seq. See also Ewald, Gesch. des Volkes Israel, etc.; Gött. 1843, et seq. B. I. Vorbereitung: all the six laborious volumes are rich in hisotrical results.

CHAPTER III.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CLAIMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO BE A DIVINE, MIRACULOUS, OR INFALLIBLE COMPOSITION.

Let us look the facts of the New Testament also in the face. Some men are glad to abandon the Old Testament to the Jews, but fear to look into the foundation of the Christian Scriptures, lest it also be found sandy. Does much depend on the New Testament? Then the more carefully must its claims be examined. Truth courts the light, its deeds never evil. Are the writings of the New Testament divine, miraculous, and infallible compositions; if the Old Testament fail — the only infallible rule of religious faith and practice? Such is the prevalent opinion with us.* After what was said above respecting the points to be proved before such a conclusion could be admitted, it becomes less difficult to decide this question. The general remarks respecting the inspiration of the Old Testament apply also to the New,† and need not be repeated. Bearing these in mind, let us subject these writings to the same test. To do this we must examine the works themselves. This general thesis may be affirmed: All the writings in the New Testament, as well as the Old, contain marks of their human origin, of human weakness and imperfection.

* See Faustus Socinus, De Auctoritate Sac. Script. Ch. I. where he defends the Scriptures against Christians; and Ch. II. against the non-Christians.

† See above, B. IV. Ch. I. and II.

Now in the New Testament as in the Old, we have spurious works mixed with the genuine. To separate the former from the latter, is not an easy work, perhaps not possible, at this day. However there are some books of unquestionable genuineness, and others whose spurious character is almost demonstrated. Modern criticism and ancient authority seem to decide that the Epistle to the Hebrews is not the work of Paul, but of some unknown author; that the second Epistle of Peter is not from that apostle, but from one who, as Scaliger said, "abused his leisure time;" the second and third of John, the Epistles of James and Jude are not from the apostolic persons whose names they bear; and that the book of the Revelation is not the work of John the Evangelist. Serious objections have been brought against some other epistles, many of which appear to be well founded, and against some of the Evangelists alluded to already.

Then if the above remarks be correct, there are seven works in the New Testament whose claim to apostolical authority was anciently doubted with good reason. These disputed writings may be neglected in the present examination.* If the other writings, whose claim to an apostolic origin is supposed to be stronger, are not found miraculous and infallible, still less shall be expected of these. The rest of the New Testament may be divided into the epistolary and the historical writings.

* The *non-apostolical* origin of these seven books is by no means *fixed* and agreed upon by all the critics. There is better evidence for the Johannic origin of the Revelation, than of the 4th Gospel. See, who will, the discussions in the Introductions of Michäelis, Hug, De Wette, and the numerous monograms on these points. See above, p. 233, note.

1. *Of the Epistolary Writings of the New Testament.*

These are the oldest Christian documents; the works of Paul, Peter, and John, the most illustrious of the early disciples, the "chiefest apostles," and most instrumental in founding the Christian church. If any of the early Christians received miraculous inspiration, it must be the apostles; if any of the apostles, it must be one, or all, of these three. To determine their claims, the works of the three may be examined together, for the sake of brevity.

Now at the first view of these fifteen epistles, it does not appear that any miraculous inspiration was required to write these more than the letters of St. Cyprian or Fenelon. They contain nothing above the reach of human faculties, and to *assume* a miraculous agency is contrary to the inductive method, to say the least of it.

Do the writers ever claim a peculiar and miraculous inspiration? The furthest from it possible. Paul speaks of his inspiration, but admits that, of all Christians, "No man can say Jesus is the Lord," that is, Christianity is true, "but by the Holy Ghost." He refers wisdom, faith, eloquence, learning, skill in the interpretation of tongues, ability to teach, or heal diseases, to inspiration: "All these worketh that one and selfsame spirit." * The Spirit of Christ was in all Christian hearts; they all received the "Spirit of God." That was Paul's view of inspiration. He and his fellow-apostles were servants that helped others to believe. He had the gift of teaching in a more eminent degree, and enjoyed a greater "abundance of revelations," and therefore taught. John carries the doc-

* Cor. XII. 1, et seq.

trine of the universal inspiration of Christians still further.

Now, if the apostles had this miraculous and peculiar inspiration, and through modesty did not state it, they must yet have known the fact. But it is notorious they taught not in the name of any private inspiration, but in that of Jesus.*

But even if the apostles claimed miraculous and infallible inspiration, and taught with authority they pretended to derive therefrom, still their claim could not be granted, for, if infallibly inspired, they must be ready for all emergencies. Now a practical question arose in a novel case, which was a test of their inspiration: Should they admit the Gentiles to Christianity? The book of Acts relates, that Peter required a special and miraculous vision to enlighten him on this head. He seems surprised to find that "God is no respecter of persons," but will allow all religious men of any nation to become Christians.† Had he been miraculously inspired before, to what purpose the vision?

If the apostles were infallibly inspired, they could not disagree on any point. Now another question comes up: Shall the Gentiles keep the old ceremonial law of Moses, and be circumcised? ‡ It would seem that men of common freedom of thought, who had heard the teaching of Jesus, would not need miraculous help to decide so plain a question. If they had the

* This point has been ably touched by Spinoza, Tract. theol. polit. chap. XI. ed. Paulus. Vol. I. p. 315, et seq. From him both Leclerc, Sentimens de quelques Théologiens, etc., and Rich. Simon, (Hist. Crit. du V. T.) seem to have drawn some of their stores. See also the acute remarks of Lessing, Werke; ed. Carlsruhe, 1824, Vol. XXIV. p. 84, et seq.

† Acts X. 1, et seq.

‡ Acts XV. 1, et seq.

alleged inspiration, each must know at once how to decide, and all would decide in the same way without consultation. But such was not the fact; they were divided on this very question — plain as it is — and held a meeting of the Christians; the "apostles and elders came together *to consider* this matter." It was not a plain case, there was "much disputing" about it. Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, spoke against the Law; James, as chairman of the meeting, sums up the matter before putting the question, takes a middle ground, proposes a resolution that all the Mosiac ritual should not be imposed upon the Gentile converts, but only a few of its prohibitions, which he reckons "necessary things." He comes to this conclusion, not by special inspiration — of which no mention is made in the meeting — but from Peter's statement of facts, and from a passage in the Prophet who says, that "all the Gentiles might seek after the Lord." The question was put; the chairman's motion prevailed; a circular was drawn up in the name of the Holy Spirit and the assembly, and sent to the Churches. But Paul and Peter seem to have disregarded it, one going beyond, the other falling short of its requisitions.

Then, again, the apostles differed on some points. Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention, and separated.* Could infallible men fall out? Paul had little respect for those "that were apostles before him," and "withstood Peter to the face." †

These apostles were mistaken in several things; in their interpretation of the Old Testament, as any one may see by examining the passages cited by Peter in

* Acts XV. 39.

† Gal. I. 11,–II. 14. See Middleton's Reflections on the dispute between Peter and Paul, Works, Vol. II.

the Acts,* or the writings of Paul.† They were all mistaken in this capital doctrine: That Jesus would return to Judea, the general resurrection and judgment take place, and the world be destroyed within a very few years, during the lifetime of the apostles. This is a very strongly marked feature in their teaching.‡ From the doubtful epistle ascribed to Peter, it seems that as times went by and the world continued, scoffers very naturally doubted the truth of this opinion,§ but were assured it would hold good.

II. *Of the Historical Writings of the New Testament.*

Here we have, apparently, though I think not really, the works of Matthew and John, two of the immediate disciples of Jesus, and of Mark and Luke, the companions of Peter and Paul. The first question is, have we really the works of these four writers? It is a question which can by no means be readily and satisfactorily answered in the affirmative. However, it cannot be entered upon in this place;|| but admitting, in argument, the works are genuine, at the first view,

* Acts II. 14–21, 25–34, III. 18, 21–24, IV. 25, 26, et al.

† Gal. IV. 24, et seq.; 1 Cor. X. 4, et seq., et al.

‡ See the essay of Mr. Norton on this point, in Statement of Reasons, etc. p. 297, et seq., and De Potter, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. cxl. et seq.

§ 2 Pet. III. 4, et seq.

|| On the affirmative side, see Paley, Evidences, Pt. I.; the masterly Treatise of Mr. Norton, Genuineness of the Gospels; Prof. Stuart's Review of it in Bib. Rep. for 1837-8; and Lardner's Credibility, etc. See, on the other side, the popular but important remarks of Hennel, ubi sup. ch. III.–VI. See also Strauss; Glaubenslehre, § 15; and the Life of Jesus, by Strauss, Theile, Neander, etc., etc.; the Introductions of Hug, De Wette, and Credner. Bruno Baur's Kritik der evang. Geschichte des Johannes; 1840, and der Synoptiker; 1841. See above, the references B. III. ch. II. at end.

there seems no need of miraculous inspiration in the case of honest men wishing to relate what they had seen, heard, or felt. It is not easy to see why miraculous and infallible inspiration was needed to write the memoirs of Jesus and the Acts of the Apostles more than the memoirs of Socrates, or the Acts of the Martyrs. The writers never claim such an inspiration. Matthew and Mark never speak of themselves as writers; Luke refers to certain "eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word" as his authority for the facts of the Gospel. John claims it as little as the others, though an unknown writer, at the end of his Gospels, testifies to the truth of the narrative.*

But even if they made this claim, so often made for them, it could not be granted, for their testimony does not agree. The Jesus of the synoptics differs very widely from the Jesus of John, in his actions, discourses, and general spiritual character, as much as the Socrates of Xenophon from that of Plato. This point was early acknowledged by Christian fathers. But not to dwell on a general disagreement, nor to come down to the perpetual and well-known disagreement in minute details, there is a most striking difference between the genealogies of Jesus as given by Matthew and Luke. Both agree that Jesus was descended from David by the father's side: but Matthew counts twenty-five ancestors between David and Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Luke enumerates forty ancestors, of whom thirty-eight are never mentioned by Matthew; one derives his descent from the illustrious Solomon, the other from the obscure Nathan; one makes Nazareth Joseph's dwelling-place, the other

* Luke I. 1, et seq. (See Acts I. 1, et seq.) John XXI. 24.

Bethlehem. They disagree, likewise, in numerous particulars of the early history, such as the miraculous appearance of the star, the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the songs, the angels, and the dreams.* Yet notwithstanding these genealogies both agree that Jesus had no human father, a fact never referred to by Mark or John, by Peter or Paul, nor in the recorded words of Jesus himself, or the people about him, who took him for the son of Joseph the carpenter. If he had no human father, how was he descended from David? Are we to believe a miracle so surprising, on the doubtful statement of two men whom we know nothing of, but who contradict themselves and one another, and relate the strongest marvels? Is it a part of religion to believe such stories? What else would we believe on such evidence? It were easy to point out other disagreements in the words, and actions, and predictions ascribed to Jesus; in the accounts of his resurrection and the impossible events of his subsequent history, but it is not needed for the present purpose.† The book of the Acts, of a mythical and legendary character, requires no special examination.

This, however, must be admitted, that the facts of the case will not warrant the claim of miraculous and infallible inspiration that is made for them; and that we are to examine with great caution before we accept

* See these discrepancies ably stated by Mr. Norton, Vol. I. p. liii. et seq., and Strauss, Life of Jesus, § 19–38, and the popular statement in Harwood, ubi sup. p. 20, et seq.; Hennel, ubi sup. ch. III. V. Middleton, Reflections on the Variations in the Gospels, Works, Vol. II. See Weisseler's attempt to reconcile these genealogies. Stud. und Krit. für 1845, p. 361, et seq. Compare the Apocryphal Gospels.

† See, who will, Evanson, Dissonance of the Evangelists, Gloucester, 1805; Strauss, § 132–142; Wolfenbüttel. Fragment. Ueber Auferstehungsgeschichte, and the numerous replies.

their statements, which, in detail, have often but a low degree of historical credibility.*

These facts cannot be hushed up, nor put out of sight; we must look them in the face. They have pained already many a breaking heart, which could not separate the truth of religion from the errors of the Christian record — felt with groans that could not be uttered. It need not be so. Christianity is one thing; the Christian document a very different matter. In them, as in the Old Testament, there is a mythology; the natural and the supernatural are confounded. The Gospels cannot be taken as historical "authorities," until a searching criticism has separated their mythological and legendary narratives, from what is purely a matter-of-fact. Some attempt to remove the difficulty by striking out the offensive passages,† and others by explaining them away, and still claim miraculous infallibility for all the rest, which the writers never claim for themselves nor allow one another. Let us rest on things as they are; not try to base our Church on things that are not.

It may be asked: If there is no foundation of fact for the miraculous part of the narrative, why did the writers dwell so much on this part? The question may be asked in the case of the catholic miracles; those of St. Bernard; of witchcraft and possessions before named. It is at least difficult to determine what lay at the bottom of the matter. But this is a fixed point, that devils, ghosts, and witches only appear where they were previously believed in, and there they con-

* On the Credibility of Historians, see Arnold, Introduct. Lect. on Mod. Hist.; Lond. 1843, Lect. VIII. See the valuable remarks of Grote, History of Greece; London, 1849, Vol I.

† See Norton, Vol. I. p. liii. et seq.

tinually appear; "imagination bodies forth the forms of things not seen." The Catholic sees the Virgin, and the Mormonite finds miracles to-day. Will not the same cause — whatever be it — help to explain the visions of Paul, the angels, and miracles of the New Testament? It is not many years since the divines of New England made collections of accounts of the devil appearing to men. If a religious teacher should appear at the time and place as Jesus appeared, it would be surprising, almost beyond belief, if miraculous tales were not connected with his birth, life, and death. Antiquity is full of sons of God, and wonder-workers. The story of Lazarus, and even that of the ascension, is not without its parallels.

But if all the charges against the New Testament are true, what then? Why, this: honest men; noble, pious, simple-hearted men; the zealous Apostles of Christianity; the first to espouse it; willing to leave all, comfort, friends, life for its sake, after all, were but men, such as are born in these days, fallible, like ourselves; often in intellectual and moral error; they shared like us, the ignorance and superstition of the times, and though earnest in looking saw not all things, but, as the wisest of them said, "through a glass darkly," and made some confusion among things they did see. Do we ask miraculous evidence to prove that Jesus lived a divine life? We can have no such testimony. We know that if he taught Absolute Religion, his Christianity is absolutely true; that if he did not teach it, still Absolute Religion remains, the everlasting rock of faith, in spite of the defects of historical evidence, or the limitations of this or that man. Has the New Testament exaggerated the greatness and

embellished the beauty of Jesus? Measure his religious doctrine by that of the time and place he lived in, or that of any time and any place! Yes, by the doctrine of eternal truth. Consider what a work his words and deeds have wrought in the world; that he is still the Way, the Truth, and the Life to millions; that he is reckoned a God by the mass of Christians, his word their standard of truth, his life the ideal they see too far above them in the heavens for their imitation; remember that though other minds have seen further, and added new truths to his doctrine of religion, yet the richest hearts have felt no deeper, and added nothing to the sentiment of religion; have set no loftier aim, no truer method than his of perfect love to God and man, and then ask, have the evangelists overrated him? We can learn few facts about Jesus; but measure him by the shadow he has cast into the world; no, by the light he has shed upon it, not by things in which Hercules was his equal, and Vishnu his superior. Shall we be told, such a man never lived; the whole story is a lie? Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived; that their story is a lie. But who did their works, and thought their thought? It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus.

CHAPTER IV

THE ABSOLUTE RELIGION INDEPENDENT OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS — THE BIBLE AS IT IS

This doctrine of the infallible inspiration of the scriptures has greater power with Christians at this day than in Paul's time. In the first ages of Christianity, each apostle was superior to the Old Testament. There were no scriptures to rely on, for the New Testament was not written, and the Old Testament was hostile. The Law stood in their way, a law of sin and death; the greatest prophets were inferior to John the Baptist, and the least in the Christian kingdom was greater than he; * all before Jesus were "thieves and robbers" in comparison. Yet Christianity stood without the New Testament. It went forward without it; made converts and produced a wondrous change in the world. The Old Testament was the servant, not the master of the early Christians. Each church used what it saw fit. Some had the whole of the Old Testament; some but a part; others added the Apocrypha, for there was no settled canon "published by authority, and appointed to be read in churches." So it was with the New Testament. Some received more than we, others less. Such men as Justin, Ignatius, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, refer to some other books, just as they quote the New

* The opinion of some disciples about the excellence of that kingdom may be seen in Irenæus, Lib. II. Ch. 33, where he speaks of the Vine-Stocks.

Testament. The canon of the New Testament was less certain than the Old. Men followed usage, tradition, or good sense in this matter, and at last the present collection was fixed by authority. But by what test were its limits decided? Alas, by no certain criterion.*

Let us look at things as they are. Here is a collection of ancient books, spurious and genuine, Hebrew and Greek. The one part belongs to a mode of worship, formal and obsolete; the other to a religion, actual, spiritual, still alive. The one gives us a Jehovah jealous and angry; the other a Father full of love. Each writer in both divisions proves by his imperfections that the earth did not formerly produce a different race of men. They contradict one another, and some relate what no testimony can render less than absurd; but yet all taken together, spite of their imperfections and positive faults, form such a collection of religious writings as the world never saw, so deep, so divine. Are not the Christian gospels and the Hebrew Psalms still often the best part of the Sunday service in the church? Truly there is but one religion for the Jew, the Gentile, and the Christian, though many theologies and ceremonies for each.

Now, unless we reject this treasure entirely, one of two things must be done: either we must pretend to believe the whole, absurdities and all; make one part just as valuable as the other, the law of Moses as the gospel of Jesus, David's curse as Christ's blessing,—

* On the use of the New Testament in the early times, see Credner, Beiträge zur Einleit. in biblischen Schriften. Ch. I. p. 1–90. Münscher, Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Vol. I. § 30–84. Augusti, Christlichen Archäologie, Vol. VI. p. 1–244, and De Wette, Vol. I. § 18–29.

and then we make the Bible our master, who puts common sense and reason to silence, and drives conscience and the religious element out of the church: or else we must accept what is true, good, and divine therein; take each part for what it is worth; gather the good together, and leave the bad to itself — and then we make the Bible our servant and helper, who assists common sense and reason, stimulates conscience and religion, coworking with them all. A third thing is not possible.

Which shall be done? The practical answer was given long ago; it has always been given, except in times of fanatical excitement. Because there is chaff and husks in the Bible, are we to eat of them, when there is bread enough and to spare? Pious men neglect what does not edify.* Who reads gladly the curses of the Psalmist; chapters that make God a man of war, a jealous God, the butcher of the nations? Certainly but few; let them be exhorted to repentance. Men cannot gather grapes of thorns, grasp them never so lovingly; honest men will leave the thorns, or pluck them up. Now criticism — which the thinking character of the age demands — asks men to do consciously, and thoroughly what they have always done imperfectly and with no science but that of a pious heart; that is, to divide the word rightly; separate mythology from history, fact from fiction, what is religious and of God, from what is earthly and not of God; to take the Bible for what it is worth. Fearful of the issue we may put off the question a few years; may insist as strongly as ever on what we know to be

* See Augustine, Doct. Christiana, Lib. I. C. 39, who says a man, supported by faith, hope, and charity, does not need the Bible except to teach others with.

false; ask men to believe it, because in the records, and thus drive bad men to hypocrisy, good men to madness, and thinking men to "infidelity;" we may throw obstacles in the way of religion and morality, and tie the mill-stone of the Old and New Testaments about the neck of piety as before. We may call men "infidels and atheists," whom reason and religion compel to uplift their voice against the idolatry of the church; or we may attempt to smooth over the matter, and say nothing about it, or not what we think. But it will not do. The day of fire and fagots is ended; the toothless "Guardian of the Faith" can only bark. The question will come, though alas for that man by whom it comes.

Other religions have their sacred books, their Korans, Vedas, Shasters, which must be received in spite of reason, as masters of the soul. Some would put the Bible on the same ground. They glory in believing whatever is prefaced with a thus-saith-the-Lord; but then all superiority of the Bible over these books disappears forever; the daylight gives place to the shadow; the law of sin and death casts out the law of the spirit of life. Let honest reason and religion pursue their own way.

CHAPTER V

CAUSE OF THE FALSE AND THE REAL VENERATION FOR THE BIBLE

The indolent and the sensual love to have a visible master in spiritual things, who will spare them the agony of thought. Credulity, ignorance, and superstition conjure up phantoms to attend them. Some honest men find it difficult to live nobly and divine; to keep the well of life pure and undisturbed, the inward ear always open and quick to the voice of God in the soul. They see, too, how often the ignorant, the wicked, the superstitious, and the fanatical confound their own passions with the still small voice of God; they see what evil, deep and dreadful, comes of this confusion. Such is the force of prejudice, indolence, habit, they find it sometimes difficult to distinguish between right and wrong; they love to lean on the Most High, and the Bible is declared His word. They say, therefore, by their action, let us have some outward rule and authority, which, being infallible, shall help the still smallness of God's voice in the heart; it will bless us when weak; we will make it our master and obey its voice. It shall be to us as a god, and we will fall down and worship it. But alas, it is not so. The word of God — no scripture will hold that. It speaks in a language no honest mind can fail to read. Such seem the most prominent causes that have made the Bible an idol of the Christians.

No doubt it will be said, " such views are dangerous, for the mass of men must always take authority for

truth, not truth for authority." But are they not true? If so the consequences are not ours; they belong to the author of truth, who can manage his own affairs, without our meddling. Is the wrong way safer than the right? No doubt it was reckoned dangerous to abandon the worship of Diana of the cross, the saints and their reliques; but the world stands, though "the image that fell down from Jupiter" is forgotten. If these doctrines be true, men need not fear they shall have no "standard of religious faith and practice." Reason, conscience, heart, and soul still remain; God's voice in nature; His word in man. His laws remain ever unchanged, though we set up our idols or pluck them down. We still have the same guide with Moses and David, Socrates and Zoroaster, Paul and John and Luther, Fenelon, Taylor, and Fox; yes, the same guide that led Jesus, the first-born of many brothers, in his steep and lonely pilgrimage.

This doctrine takes nothing from the Bible but its errors, which only weaken its strength; its truth remains, brilliant and burning with the light of life. It calls us away from each outward standard to the eternal truths of God; from the letter and the imperfect scripture of the word to the living word itself. Then we see the true relation the Bible sustains to the soul; the cause of the real esteem in which it is held is seen to be in its moral and religious truths; their power and loveliness appear. These have had the greatest influence on the loftiest minds and the lowliest hearts for eighteen hundred years. How they have written themselves all over the world, deepest in the best of men! What greatness of soul has been found amid the fragrant leaves of the Bible, sufficient to lead men to embrace its truths, though at the expense of accepting tales which make the blood curdle!

Take the Bible for what is true in it, and the first chapter of Genesis is a grand hymn of creation, a worthy prelude of the sublime chants that follow; it sings this truth: the world was not always; is not the work of chance, but of the living God; all things are good, made to be blest. The writer — who, perhaps, never thought he was writing "an article of faith"— if he were a Jew, might superstitiously refer the Sabbath to the time of creation and the agency of God, just as the Greek refers one festival to Hercules, and another to Bacchus. Then oriental piety comes beautiful from the grave hewn in the rock by our dull theology; utters her word of counsel and hope; sings her mythological poem, and warms the heart, but does not teach theology, or physical science.

The sweet notes of David's prayer; his mystic hymn of praise, so full of rippling life; his lofty Psalm, which seems to unite the warbling music of the wind, the sun's glance, and the rush of the lightning; which calls on the mountain and the sea, and beast, and bird, and man, to join his full heart,— all these shall be sweet and elevating, but we shall leave his pernicious curse to perish where it fell.

The excellence of the Hebrew devotional hymns has never been surpassed. Heathenism, Christianity, with all their science, arts, literature, bright and many-colored, have little that approach these. They are the despair of imitators; still the uttered prayer of the Christian world. Tell us of Greece, whose air was redolent of song; its language such as Jove might speak; its sages, heroes, poets, honored in every clime,— they have no psalm of prayer and praise like these Hebrews, the devoutest of men, who saw God always before them, ready to take them up when father and mother let them fall.

Some of the old prophets were men of stalwart and robust character, set off by a masculine piety that puts to shame our puny littleness of heart. They saw hope the plainest when danger was most imminent, and never despaired. Fear of the people, the rulers, the priests, could not awe them to silence, nor gold buy smooth things from the prophet's tongue. They left hypocrisy, with his weeds and weepers, and feigning but unstained handkerchief, to follow the coffin he knew to be empty, and went their own way, as men. What shall screen the guilty from the prophet's word? Even David is met with a Thou-art-the-man. What if they were stoned, imprisoned, sawn asunder? It was a prophet's reward. They did not prophesy smooth things; they gave the truth and took blows, not asking love for love. If these men are set up as masters of the soul, justice must break her staff over their heads. But view them as patriots whom danger aroused from the repose of life; as pious men awakened by concern for the public virtue, and nobler men never spoke speech.

> Out from the heart of nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old.*

Little needs now be said of the New Testament, of the simple truth that rustles in its leaves, its parables, epistles, where Paul lifts up his manly voice, and John, or whoso wrote the words, pours out the mystic melody of his faith. Why tell the deep words of Jesus? Have we exhausted their meaning? The world — has it outgrown love to God and man? They still act in gentle bosoms, giving strength to the strong, and justice and meekness and charity and faith to beauti-

* Emerson.

ful souls, long tried and oppressed. There is no need of new words to tell of this.

Now it is not in nature to respect the false, and yet reverence the true. Call the Bible master — we do not see the excellence it has. Take it as other books, we have its beauty, truth, religion, not its deformities, fables, and theology. We shall not believe in ghosts, though Isaiah did; nor in devils, though Jesus teach there are such. We shall see the excellence of Paul in his manly character, not in the miracles wrought by his apron; the nobleness of Jesus, in the doctrine he taught and the life he lived, not in the walk on the water or the miraculous draughts of fish. We shall care little about the "endless genealogies and old-wives' fables," though still deemed essential by many — but much for being good and doing good. Our faith — let him shake down the Andes who has an arm for that work.

On the other hand, he that accepts the monstrous prodigies of the gospels; is delighted to believe that Jesus had divine authority for laying on forms, and damning all but the baptized; that he gave Peter authority to bind and loose on earth and in heaven; commanding his disciples to make friends of "the mammon of unrighteousness," to tease God, as an unjust judge, into compliance, with vain repetitions — can he accept the absolute religion? It is not possible, for a long time, to make serious things of trifles, without making trifles of serious things. Cannot drunkenness be justified out of the Old Testament; the very Solomon advising the poor man to drown his sorrow in wine? Jeremiah curses the man that will not fight.*

* Proverbs XXXI. 6, et seq. Jer. XLVIII. 10

Is not Sarah commended by the fathers of the church, and Abraham by the sons? Men justify slavery out of the New Testament, because Paul had not his eye open to the evil, but sent back a fugitive! It is dangerous to rely on a troubled fountain for the water of life.

The good influence of the Bible, past and present, as of all religious books, rests on its religious significance. Its truths not only sustain themselves, but the mass of errors connected therewith. Truth can never pass away. Men sometimes fear the Bible will be destroyed by freedom of thought and freedom of speech. Let it perish if such be the case. Truth cannot fear the light, nor are men so mad as to forsake a well of living water. All the free thinking in the world could not destroy the Iliad; how much less the truths of the Bible. Things at last will pass for their true value. The truths of the Bible, which have fed and comforted the noblest souls for so many centuries, may be trusted to last our day. The Bible has already endured the greatest abuse at the hands of its friends, who make it an idol, and would have all men do it homage. We need call none our master but the Father of All. Yet the Bible, if wisely used, is still a blessed teacher. Spite of the superstition and folly of its worshippers, it has helped millions to that fountain where Moses and Jesus, with the holy-hearted of all time, have stooped and been filled. We see the mistakes of its writers, for though noble and of great stature, they saw not all things. We reject their follies; but their words of truth are still before us, to admonish, to encourage, and to bless. From time to time God raises up a prophet to lead mankind. He speaks his word as it is given him; serves his generation for the time,

and falls at last, when it is expedient he should give way to the next comforter whom God shall send. But mankind is greater than a man, and never dies. The experience of the past lives in the present. The light that shone at Nineveh, Egypt, Judea, Athens, Rome, shines no more from those points; it is everywhere. Can truth decease, and a good idea once made real ever perish? Mankind, moving solemnly on its appointed road, from age to age, passes by its imperfect teachers, guided by their light, blessed by their toil, and sprinkled with their blood. But truth, like her God, is before and above us forever. So we pass by the lamps of the street, with wonder at their light, though but a smoky glare; they seem to change places and burn dim in the distance as we go on; at last the solid walls of darkness shut them in. But high over our head are the unsullied stars, which never change their place, nor dim their eye. So the truths of the scriptures will teach forever, though the record perish and its authors be forgot. They came from God, through the soul of man. They have exhausted neither God nor the soul. Man is greater than the Bible. That is one ray out of the sun; one drop from the infinite ocean. The inward Christ, which alone abideth forever, has much to say which the Bible never told, much which the historical Jesus never knew. The Bible is made for man, not man for the Bible. Its truths are old as the creation, repeated more or less purely in every tongue. Let its errors and absurdities no longer be forced on the pious mind, but perish forever; let the word of God come through conscience, reason, and holy feeling, as light through the windows of morning. Worship with no master but God, no creed but truth, no service but love, and we have nothing to fear.

BOOK V

"When the church, without temporal support, is able to do her great works upon the unforced obedience of man, it argues a divinity about her. But when she thinks to credit and better her spiritual efficacy, and to win herself respect and dread, by strutting in the false vizard of wordly authority, it is evident that God is not there, but that her apostolic virtue is departed from her, and hath left her key-cold; which she perceiving, as in a decayed nature, seeks to the outward fomentations and chafings of worldly help, and external flourishes, to fetch, if it be possible, some motion into her extreme parts, or to hatch a counterfeit life with the crafty and artificial heat of jurisdiction. But it is observable, that so long as the church, in true imitation of Christ, can be content to ride upon an ass, carrying herself and her government along in a mean and simple guise, she may be, as he is, a lion of the tribe of Judah; and in her humility all men, with loud hosannas, will confess her greatness. But when, despising the mighty operation of the Spirit by the weak things of this world, she thinks to make herself bigger and more considerable by using the way of civil force and jurisdiction, as she sits upon this lion, she changes into an ass, and instead of hosannas, every man pelts her with stones and dirt."— MILTON.— *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty,* Bk. II., Chap. III.

BOOK V

THE RELATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT TO THE GREATEST OF HUMAN INSTITUTIONS, OR A DISCOURSE OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I

CLAIMS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Catholic church, and most if not all the minor Protestant churches, claim superiority over reason, conscience, and the religious element in the individual soul, assuming dominion over these, as the State justly assumes authority over the excessive passions and selfishness of men. Now since the former are not, like the latter, evils in themselves, the church, to justify itself, must denounce them either as emanations from the devil, or at best as uncertain and dangerous guides. The churches make this claim of superiority, either distinctly in their creeds and formularies of faith, claiming a divine origin for themselves, or by implication, in their actions, when they condemn and blast with curses one who differs from them in religious matters, and teaches doctrines they disapprove. In virtue of this assumed superiority the Christian church, as a whole, denies what it calls "salvation" to all out of the Christian church — excepting some of the Jews before Christ — though their life be divine as an angel's. How often have Socrates and that long line of noble men who do honor to Greek and Roman an-

tiquity been dammed by hirelings of the church? The Catholic church denies salvation to all out of its pale, and in general each church of the straiter and more numerous sects confirms the damnation of all who think more liberally. Men who expose to scorn the folly of their assumptions, the Bayles, the Humes, the Voltaires; men who will not accept their pretensions, the Newtons, the Lockes, the Priestleys, the Channings have their warrant of eternal damnation made out and sealed; not because their life was bad, but their faith not orthodox! Supported by this claim of superiority on the churches' part, canonized ignorance may blast learning; ecclesiastical dullness condemn secular genius; and surpliced impiety, with shameless forehead, may damn religion, meek and thoughtful, who out of the narrow church, walks with beautiful feet on the rugged path of mortal life, and makes real the kingdom of heaven.

For many centuries it has been a heresy in the Christian churches to believe that any man out of their walls, could expect less than damnation in the next world; it is still a heresy. It is taught with great plainness by the majority of Christians, that God will damn to eternal torments the majority of his children, because they are not in any of the Christian churches.* If we look into the value of this claim of superiority, we shall find the foundation on which it rests. It must be either in the idea of a church, or in the fact of the Christian

* For the opinion of the Catholics on this point, see *instar omnium* Bossuet, Hist. des Variations, Liv. II. et al.; for that of the Protestants, see their various confessions, etc., conveniently collected in Niemeyer, Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis reformatis; Lips. 1840. Hahn, ubi sup. § 103 and 143. Bretschneider, ubi sup. Vol. II. § 204, p. 174, et seq. But see Hase, Hutterus redivivus, § 88.

church receiving this delegated power from a human or a divine founder.

I. *Of the idea of a Church.*

We do not speak, except figuratively, of a church of Moses or Mahomet. It seems to be necessary to the idea of a visible and historical church, that there should be a model-man for its central figure, around whom others are to be grouped. He must be an example of the virtues religion demands; an incarnation of God, to adopt the phrase of ancient India, which has since become so prevalent among the Christians. Now Moses, viewed as a mythological character, and Mahomet, as an historical person, were not model-men, but miraculous characters whose relation to God and perfection of life each faithful soul might not share, for it was peculiar to themselves. Their character was not their own work. It was made for them by God, and therefore they could not be objects of imitation. It would be impious madness in the Mussulman or the Jew, to aim at the perfections of the great prophet who stood above him.

Now there is this peculiarity of the greater part of Christians, that while they affirm Jesus to be God, by the divine side, they yet claim him as a model-man, on the human side, and so call him a God-man.* About this central figure, the Christian church is grouped. The fourth gospel represents him as the way, the truth, and the life, for all men. The churches also assume that he is to be imitated. But they assume

* This term *God-man,* is of heathen origin, and involves a contradiction as much as the term *Circle-triangle.* The common mistake seems to arise from taking a *figure of speech for a matter-of-fact,* which leads to worse confusion in theology than it would in geometry.

this in defiance of logic, for Jesus is represented as born miraculously, endowed with miraculous powers, and separated from all others by his peculiar relation to God, in short, as a God-man. Of course he must be a model only to other God-men, who are born miraculously, endowed and defended as he was; he is no model to men born of flesh and blood, who have none but human powers. But he is the only God-man, and so no model to any one. Still more of the Christian churches view him as the infinite God with all his infinity; dwelling in the flesh, it is absurd to make him a model for men. But the churches have rarely stopped at an absurdity. They "call things that are not as if they were." Yet since the life of Jesus appears so entirely human in his friendships, sorrows, love, prayer, temptation, triumph, and death, and the apostles now and then represent him as the great example — the churches could not forbear making him the model-man. Hence the homilies of the preacher; the disquisition of the schoolmen; the glorifying treatise of the mystic; the painting of the artist, giving us his triumph, transfiguration, farewell meeting, and crucifixion — all aim to bring the great exemplar distinctly before human consciousness, in the most prominent scenes of his life, and always as a man, that the lesson of divinity might not be lost.

Now if he be this model-man, and the churches are but assemblies of men and women grouped about him, to be instructed by his words and warned by his example, it is not easy to see what authority they naturally have over the individual soul.

II. *Of the Fact of the Christian Churches.*

If Jesus were but a wise and good man, no word of his could have authority over reason and conscience.

At best, it could repeat their oracles, and therefore he could never found an institution which should be master of the soul. But even if he were what the churches pretend, it does not appear that he has given this authority to any on earth. If we may credit the gospels, Jesus established no organization; founded no church in any common sense of that term. He taught wherever men would listen; to numbers in the synagogue, temple, and fields; to a few in the little cottage at Bethany, and in the fisher's boat. He gave no instruction to his disciples to found a church; he sent them forth to preach the glad tidings to all mankind: the spirit within was their calling and authority; Jesus their example; God their guide, protector, and head. In all the ministrations of Jesus, there is nothing which approaches the formation of a church. What was freely received was to be given as freely. Baptism and the Supper were accidents. He appointed no particular body of men as teachers, but sent forth his disciples all of them, to proclaim the truth. The twelve had no actual authority over others; no preëminence in spreading the gospel. Had they a right to bind and to loose? Let Paul answer the question.* The first martyr, the most active evangelist, and the greatest apostle were not of the twelve. Excepting Peter, James, and John, the rest did little that we know of.† Did Jesus say — as Matthew relates — that he would found a church on Simon Peter? It must have been a sandy foundation.‡ Paul did not fear to withstand him to

* Galat. I. II. et al. Strauss, ch. V. Schwegler, Nachapost. Zeitalter; Tüb. 1846, Vol. I. p. 114, et seq. Baur, Paulus der Apostel; Stuttgart, 1846, p. 104, et seq.

† See in Gieseler, Text-Book of Eccles. Hist.; Philad. 1836. Vol. I. § 25–27.

‡ Math. XVI. 18, 19. See the various opinions of interpreters of this passage so improperly thrust into the mouth of Jesus, in

the face. Jesus appointed neither place nor day for worship. All the commands of the decalogue are reinforced in the New Testament, excepting that which enjoins the Sabbath; all the rest are natural laws. Religion with Jesus was a worship in spirit and in truth; a service at all times and in every place. He fell back on natural religion and morality, demanding a divine life, purity without and piety within; but he left the when, the where and the how to take care of themselves. A church, in our sense of the term, is not so much as named in the gospels. But religion, above all emotions, brings men together. Uniting around this central figure, bound by the strongest of ties, the spiritual sympathies fired with admiration for the great soul of Jesus, relying on his authority, there grew up, unavoidably, a body of men and women. These the apostles call the Church of Christ. Religion as it descends into practice, takes a concrete form, which depends on the character and condition of the men who receive it: hence come the rites, dogmas, and ceremonies which mark the church of this or that age and nation.

The Christian church may be defined as a body of men and women united in a common regard for Jesus, assembling for the purposes of worship and religious instruction. It has the powers delegated by individuals who compose it.*

De Wette, Exegetische Handbuch zur N. T. See Origen's ingenious gloss.

* See the various opinions of the Catholics and Protestants on this point collected in Winer, Comparativ Darstellung der Lehrbegriffs; Leip. 1837, § 19, on the formation of the church. See much valuable matter in Ritschl, Die Entstehung der Altkatholischen Kirche; Bonn, 1850. Buch, II.

CHAPTER II

THE GRADUAL FORMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In the earliest times of Christianity there were no regular systems of doctrine, to bind men together. The truths of natural religion, the special forms of Judaism, and a somewhat indefinite belief in Jesus, were the cardinal points and essentials of Christianity. The public religious service seems perfectly free. Where the spirit of the Lord was, there was liberty. No one controlled another's freedom. The much vaunted "form of sound words" was notoriously different with different teachers. Paul, who came late to Christianity, boasts that he received his doctrine straightway from God, not from those "who were apostles before him," whom he seems to hold in small esteem. The decision of the council at Jerusalem, even if it ever took place, did not bind him. The practical side of Christianity was developed more than the theoretical. The effect of the truth proclaimed with freedom, was soon manifest; for the errors and superstition still clinging to the mind of the apostles could not chain mankind. Love increased; Christianity bore fruit; the church spread wide its arms. It emancipated men from the yokes of the ancient sacerdotal class; but there was a fierce struggle in the new congregations before the Jewish forms could be given up. The Christians were "a royal priesthood;" all were "kings and priests," appointed to offer a "spiritual sacrifice." The apostles who had seen Jesus,

or understood his doctrine, naturally took the lead of men they sought to instruct. As the number of Christians enlarged, some organization was needed for practical purposes. The pattern was taken from the Jewish synagogue, which claimed no divine authority; not from the temple, whose officers made such a claim. Hence there were elders and deacons. One of the elders was an overseer, like the "speaker" in a legislative assembly. But all these were chosen by the people, and as much of the people after their choice as before. There was no clergy and no laity; all were sons of God, recipients of inspiration from Him. The Holy Ghost fell upon all, the same in kind, only divine in degree and mode of manifestation. The wish of Moses was complied with, and God put his spirit upon each of them; the prediction of Joel was fulfilled, and their sons and their daughters prophesied; the word of Jeremiah had come to pass, and God put his law in their inward parts, and wrote it on their heart, and they all knew the Lord from the least to the greatest. They were "anointed of God," and "knew all things;" they "needed not that any man should teach them." Christ and God were in all holy hearts. The overseer, or bishop, claimed no power over the people; he was only first among his peers; the greatest only because the servant of all. Even Apollos, Cephas, Paul, who were they but servants, through whom others believed? The bishop had no authority to bind and loose in heaven or earth; no right to enforce a doctrine. He was not the standard of faith; that was "the mind of the Lord," which He would reveal to all who sought it. There was no monopoly of teaching on the part of the elders. A bishop, says the author of the Epistle to Timothy, "must be able to teach," not the only teacher,

not necessarily a preacher at all; but a minister of silence as well as speech. Inspiration was free to all men. "Quench not the spirit;" "prove all things;" "hold fast what is good;" "covet earnestly the best gifts,"— these were the watchwords. Under fetichism, all could consult their god, and be inspired; miracles took place continually. Under polytheism only a few could come to God at first hand; they alone were inspired, and miracles were rare. Under Christian monotheism, God dwelt in all faithful hearts; old covenants and priesthoods were done away, and so all were inspired.*

The New Testament was not written, and the Old Testament was but the shadow of good things to come, and since they had come, the children of the free woman were not to sit in the shadow, but to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Man, the heir of all things, long time kept under taskmasters and governors, had now come of age and taken possession of his birthright. The decision of a majority of delegates assembled in a council, bound only themselves.

Then the body of men and women worshipping in any one place was subject neither to its own officers,

* On the state of the early church, and the bishops, elders, and deacons, which is still a matter of controversy, see Campbell, Lectures on Ecc. History, Lec. I.–XIII. Gieseler, ubi sup. § 29. Mosheim, ubi sup. Book I. Art. II. Chap. II. Neander, Allg. Geschichte der Christlichen Religion, Hamb. 1835, Vol. I. Part I. Chap. II. Gibbon, Chap. XV. Schleiermacher, Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche; Berlin, 1840, p. 86, et seq. Among the modern writers Milman takes the other side. History of Christianity; Lond. 1840, Book II. Chap. II. p. 63, et seq. See the recent works of Gfrörer, Hase, Schwegler, Baur, Schliemann, Ritschl, Staudenmaier, Rothensee, Hilgenfeld, etc.,— Stanley and Jowett and Martineau.

nor to the church at large; nor to the scriptures of the Old or the New Testament. No man on earth, no organization, no book was master of the soul. Each church made out its canon of scripture as well as it could.* Some of our canonical writings were excluded, and apocryphal writings used in their stead. Indeed, respecting this matter of scripture, there has never been a uniform canon among all Christians. The Bible of the Latin differs from that of the Greek church, and contains thirteen books the more. The Catholic differs from the Protestant; the early Syrians from their contemporaries; the Abyssinians from all other churches, it seems. Ebionites would not receive the beginning of Matthew and Luke; the Marcionites had a gospel of their own. The Socinians, and perhaps others, left off the whole of the Old Testament,† or counted it unnecessary. The followers of Swedenborg do not find a spiritual sense in all the books of the canon. Critics yearly make inroads upon the canon, striking out whole books or obnoxious passages, as not genuine. In the first ages of Christianity, the Bible was a subordinate thing. In modern times it has been made a vehicle to carry any doctrine the expositor sees fit to interpret into it.‡ The first preachers of Christianity fell back on the authority of Jesus; appealed to the moral sense of mankind; applied the doctrines of Christianity to life as well as they could, and with much zeal, and some superstition and many

* See in Eusebius, H. E. III. 39, the use that Papias makes of Tradition; he stood on the debatable ground between the Bible and tradition, and continued to *mythologize*. Ewald, Jahrbücher for 1854, Ch. XXXIII.

† See Faustus Socinus, ubi sup. p. 271, et al.

‡ See, on this point, some ingenious remarks of Hegel, Philosophie der Religion, Vol. I, p. 29, et seq.

mistakes, developed the practical side of Christianity much more than its theoretical side.

But even in the Apostles, Christianity had lost somewhat of its simplicity, much of the practical character which marks the teaching of Jesus in the synoptics. The doctrine of Paul was far removed from the doctrine of Jesus. It was not plain religion and morality coming from the absolute source, and proceeding by the absolute method to the absolute end. It is taught on the "authority of Christ." The Jews must believe he was the Messiah of the prophets. "Salvation" is connected with a belief in his person. "Neither is there salvation by any other," says the author who takes the name of Peter; the fourth gospel makes Jesus declare, "No man cometh unto the father but by me," "all that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." The Jewish doctrine of "redemption" and reconciliation by sacrifice appears more or less in the genuine works of the apostles, and very clearly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We may explain some of the obnoxious passages as "figures of speech," referring to the "Christ born in us;" but a fair interpretation leaves it pretty certain the writers added somewhat to the simpler form of Jesus, though they might not share the gross doctrines since often taught in their name. Christ is in some measure a mythological being even with Paul,— he was with the Jews in the desert, and assisted at the creation. The Jesus of history fades out and the Christ of fiction takes his place. The Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection of the body appears undeniably; a local heaven and a day of judgment, in which Jesus is to appear in person and judge the world, are very clearly taught. The fourth gospel speaks of Jesus as he never speaks of

himself; the Platonic doctrine of the Logos appears therein. We may separate the apostolic doctrine into three classes: The Judaizing, the Alexandrine, and the Pauline, each differing more or less essentially from the simple mode of religion of the Synoptics.* Already with the Apostles Jesus has become in part defied, his personality confounded with the infinite God.† Was it not because of the very vastness and beauty of soul that was in him? The private and peculiar doctrines of the early Christians appear in strange contrast with the gentle precepts of love to man and God, in which Jesus sums up the essentials of religion. But, alas, what is arbitrary and peculiar in each form of worship, is of little value; the best things are the commonest, for no man can lay a new foundation, nor add to the old, more than the wood, hay and stubble of his own folly. The great excellence of Jesus was in restoring natural religion and morality to their true place; an excellence which even the apostles but poorly understood.‡

In their successors Christianity was a very different thing, and in the course of a few years — alas a very few — it appeared in the mass of the churches, an idle mummery; a collection of forms and superstitious rites.

* The Epistle to the Hebrews and the earlier Apocryphal Gospels and Epistles are valuable monuments of the opinions of the Christians at the time they were written. It is a curious fact that *circumcision* was rigidly enforced by the bishops in the church at Jerusalem for more than a century after the death of Christ; many of the laity also were circumcised. Sulpitius Severus, Lib. II.

† See Dorner and Baur; also Mass. Quarterly Review, Vol. III. Art. V., on the Christologies of N. T.

‡ See the impartial remarks of Schlosser, respecting the origin and subsequent fate of Christianity, in his Geschichte der alten Welt, Vol. III. Pt. I. p. 249–274, Pt. II. p. 110–129, 381–416.

Heathenism and Judaism, with all sorts of superstitious absurdities in their train, came into the church. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem clung to the most obnoxious feature of Judaism. Christianity was the stalking-horse of ambition. A man stepped at once from the camp to the bishop's mitre, and brought only the piety of the Roman legion into the church. The doctrine of many a Christian writer was less pure and beautiful than the faith of Seneca and Cicero, not to name Zoroaster, Pythagoras and Socrates. After less than a century there was a distinction between clergy and laity. The former ere long became "Lords over God's heritage," not "ensamples unto the flock." They were masters of the doctrine; could bind and loose on earth and in heaven. The majority in a council bound the minority, and the voices of the clergy determined what was "the mind of the Lord." Thus the clergy became the church, and were set above reason and conscience in the individual man. They were chosen by themselves, and responsible to none on earth. Private inspiration was reckoned dangerous. Freedom of conscience was forbidden; he who denied the popular faith was accursed. The organization of the church was then copied from the Jewish temple, not the synagogue. The minister was a priest, and stood between God and the people; the bishop, an high-priest after the order of Aaron, his kingdom of this world. He was the "Successor of the Apostles"; the Vicegerent of Christ. Men came to the clerical office with no religious qualification.* Baptism atoned for all sins, and was sometimes put off till the last hour, that the Christian might give full swing to the flesh, and float

* The histories of Synesius and Ambrose afford a striking picture of the clerical class in their time.

into heaven at last on the lustral waters of baptism. Bits of bread from the "Lord's table," were a talisman to preserve the faithful from all dangers by sea and land. Prayers were put up for the dead; the cross was worshipped; the bones of the martyrs could work miracles, cast out devils, calm a tempest, and even raise the dead. The eucharist was forced into the mouths of children before they could say "my father, and my mother." The sign of the cross and the "sacred oil" were powerful as Canidia's spell. In point of toleration the Christians went backward for a time, far behind the Athenians and men of Rome.* The clergy assumed power over conscience; power to admit to heaven, or condemn to hell; and not only decided in matters of mummery, whereof they made "divine service" to consist, but decreed what men should believe in order to obtain eternal life; an office the sublimest of all the sons of men, modest because he was great, never took upon himself. They collected the writings of the New Testament, and decided what should be the "Standard of Faith," and what not. But their canon was arbitrary, including some spurious books of small value, and rejecting others more edifying. However, they allowed some latitude in the interpretation of the works they had canonized. But next they went further, and developed systematically the doctrines of the scripture, on points deemed the most important, such as the "nature of God" and Christ. Thus the "mind of the Lord" was determined and laid down, so that he might read that ran. The mysticism of Plato, and the dialectic subtleties of the Stagirite afforded matter for the pulpit and councils to discuss.

* See the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian, passim, for proofs of what is said above.

This method of deciding dark questions by plurality of votes has always been popular in Christendom. In some things the majority are always right; in some always wrong. The four hundred prophets of Baal have a "lying spirit" in them; Micaiah alone is in the right. The college of Padua, and the Sorbonne would have voted down Galileo and Newton, a hundred to one; but what then? Majority of voices proves little in morals or mathematics. A single man in Jerusalem on a certain time had more moral and religious truth than Herod and the Sanhedrim. Synods of Dort and assemblies of divines settle nothing but their own opinions, which will be reversed the next century, or stand, as now, a snare to the conscience of pious men.

In the early times of Christianity, the teachers in general were men of little learning, imbued with the prejudices and vain philosophies of the times; men with passions, some of them quite untamed, notwithstanding their pious zeal. In the first century no eminent man is reckoned among the Christians. But soon doctrines, that played a great part in the heathen worship, and which do not appear in the teaching of Jesus, were imposed upon men, on pain of damnation in two worlds. They are not yet extinct. Rites were adopted from the same source. The scum of idolatry covered the well of living water. The flesh and the devil sat down at the "Lord's table" in the Christian church, and with forehead unabashed, pushed away the worthy bidden guest. What passed for Christianity in many churches during the fourth and a large part of the third century was a vile superstition. The image of Christ was marred. Men paid God in Cæsar's pence. The shadows of great men, Pythagoras,

Socrates, Plato; yes, the shades of humbler men, of name unknown to fame, might have come up, disquieted like Samuel, from their grave, and spit upon the superstition of the Christians defiling Persia, and Athens, and Rome. It deserved the mockery it met. Christianity was basely corrupted long before it gained the Roman palace. Had it not been depraved, when would it have reached king's courts; in the time of Constantine, or of Louis XIV? The quarrels of the bishops; the contentions of the councils; the superstition of the laymen and the despotism and ambition of the clergy in general; the ascetic doctrine taught as morality; the monastic institutions with their plan of a divine life, are striking signs of the times, and contrast wonderfully with that simple Nazarene and his lowly obedience to God and manly love of his brothers.

Yet here and there were men who fed with faith and works the flame of piety, which, rising from their lowly hearth, streamed up towards heaven, making the shadows of superstition and of sin look strange and monstrous as they fell on many a rood of space. These were the men who saved the Sodom of the church. Did Christianity fail? The Christianity of Christ is not one thing and human nature another. It is human virtue, human religion, man in his highest moments; the effect no less than the cause of human development, and can never fail till man ceases to be man. Under all this load of superstition the heart of faith still beat. How could the world forget its old institutions, riot and sin in a moment? It is not thus the dull fact of the world's life yields to the divine idea of a man. The rites of the public worship; the clerical class; the stress laid on dogmas and forms;

all this was a tribute to the indolence and sensuality of mankind. The asceticism, celibacy, mortification of the body, contempt of the present life; the hatred of all innocent pleasure; the scorn of literature, science, and art,— these are the natural reaction of mankind, who had been bid to fill themselves with merely sensual delight. The lives of Mark Anthony, Sallust, Crassus; of Julius Cæsar, Nero, and Domitian explain the origin of asceticism and monastic retirement better than folios will do it. The writings of Petronius Arbiter, of Apuleius and Lucian, render necessary the words of Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, and John of Damascus. Individuals might come swiftly out of Egyptian darkness into the light of religion, but the world moves slow, and oscillates from one extreme to the opposite.* For a time the leaven of Christianity seemed lost in the lump of human sin; but it was doing its great work in ways not seen by mortal eyes. The most profound of all revolutions must require centuries for its work. The good never dies. The persecutions directed by tyrannical emperors against the new faith, only helped the work. What is written in blood is widely read and not soon forgot. Could the "holy alliance" of ease, hypocrisy, and sin put down Christianity, which proclaimed the one God, the equality and brotherhood of all men? Did force ever prevail in the long run against reason or religion? The ashes of a Polycarp and a Justin sow the earth for a Cadmean harvest of heroes of the soul; a man leaving wife and babes and dying a martyr's death — this is an eloquence the dullest can understand. If a fire is to

* But see how reluctantly Synesius comes to the duties of a bishop. Ep. 105, cited in Hampden, Bampton Lectures; Lond. 1837, p. 407, et seq.

spread in the forest let all the winds blow upon it. Even a bad thing is not put down by abuse. However, to see the earnest of that vast result Christianity is destined to work out for the nations, we must not look at king's courts, in Byzantium or Paris; not in the chairs of bishops, noble or selfish; not at the martyr's firmness when his flesh is torn off, for the unflinching Tuscarora surpasses "the noble army of martyrs" in fortitude; but in the common walks of life, its every-day trials; in the sweet charities of the fireside and the street; in the self-denial that shares its loaf with the distressful; the honest heart which respects others as itself. Looking deeper than the straws of the surface we see a stream of new life is in the world, and, though choked with mud, not to be dammed up.

The history of Christianity reveals the majestic preeminence of its earthly founder. In him amid all his Messianic expectations, there shines a clear religious light — love to God, love to man. Come to the later times of the apostles, the sky is overcast with dogmatic clouds, and doubtful twilight begins. Take another step and the darkness deepens. Come down to Justin Martyr, it is deeper still; to Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian; to the times of the Council of Nice; read the letters of Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, the apologies of Christianity, the fierce bickerings of strong men about matters of no moment,— we should think it the midnight of the Christian church, did we not know that after this "woe was past," there came another woe; that there was a refuge of lies remaining where the blackness of darkness fell, and the shadow of death lingered long and would not be lifted up.

It is not necessary to go into the painful task of trac-

ing the obvious decline of Christianity, and its absorption in the organization of the church, which assumed the keys of heaven, and bound and tortured men on earth. It is beautiful to see the free piety of Paul, amid all his dogmatic subtleties,— a man to whom the world owes so much,*— and the happy state of the earlier churches; when no one controlled another, except by wisdom and love; when each was his own priest, with no middle-man to forestall inspiration, and stand between him and God; when each could come to the father, and get truth at first hand if he would. Jesus would break every yoke, but new yokes were soon made, and in his name. He bade men pray as he did; with no mediator, nothing between them and the Father of all; making each place a temple and each act a divine service. With the doctrines of his religion on their tongue; the example of Jesus to stimulate and encourage them; the certain conviction that truth and God were on their side; going into the world of men sick of their worn-out rituals, and hungering and thirsting after a religion they could confide in, live and die by; having stout hearts in their bosoms which danger could not daunt, nor gold bribe, nor contempt shame, nor death appall, nor friends seduce — no wonder the apostles prevailed! An earnest man, though rude as Böhme, and Bunyan, and Fox, even in our times, coming in the name of religion, speaking its word of fire, and appealing to what is deepest and divinest in our heart, never lacks auditors. Now the zeal of the Mormons makes converts. No wonder the apostles conquered the world. It were a miracle if they had not put to flight "armies of the aliens," the makers of

* See Parker, ubi sup. p. 238, et seq.

"silver shrines," and "them that sold and bought in the temple." Man moves man the world round, and religion multiplies itself as the banian tree. Men with all the science of the nineteenth century, but no religion, can scarce hold a village together, while every religious fanatic, from Mahomet to Mormon, finds followers plenty as flowers in summer, and true as steel. Can no man divine the cause?

Blessed was the Christian church while all were brothers. But soon as the Trojan horse of an organized priesthood was dragged through the ruptured wall, there came out of it, stealthily, men cunning as Ulysses, cruel as Diomed, arrogant as Samuel, exclusive and jealous, armed to the teeth in the panoply of worldliness. The little finger of the Christian priesthood was found thicker than the loins of their fathers — the flamens of Jupiter, Quirinus, the Levitical priests of Jehovah. Then belief began to take the place of life; the priest of the man; the church of home; the flesh and the devil of the word and the Holy Spirit. Divine service was mechanism; religion priestcraft; Christianity a thing for kings to swear by, and to help priests to wealth and fame. But a seed remained that never bowed the knee to the idol. Righteous men, they were cursed by the church, and blessed by the God of truth. We are to blame no class of men, neither the learned who were hostile to Christianity, nor the priests who assumed this power for the loaves and fishes' sake; they were men, and did as others, with their light and temptations, would have done. Looking with human eyes, it is not possible to see how the evil could have been avoided. The wickedness long intrenched in the world; that undercurrent of sin which runs through the nations; the low civiliza-

tion of the race; the selfishness of strong men, their awful wars; the hideous sins of slavery, polygamy, the oppression of the weak; the power of lust, brutality, and every sin,— these were obstacles that even Christianity could not sweep away in a moment, though strongest of the historic daughters of God. Men could sail safely for some years in the light of Jesus, though seen more and more dimly. But as the stream of time swept them further down, and the cold shadow from mountains of hoary crime came over them anew, they felt the darkness. Let us judge these men lightly. Low as the Christian church was in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, it yet represented the best interests of mankind as no other institution. Individuals but not societies rose above it, and soared away to the heaven of peace, amid its cry of excommunication. Let us give the church its due.

Now as no institution exists and claims the unforced homage of men unless it have some real, permanent excellence, in virtue of which alone it holds its place, being hindered, not helped by the accidental error, falsity, and sin, connected therewith; and since the Christian church has always stood, in spite of its faults, and filled such a place in human affairs as no other institution, it becomes us to look for the idea it represents, knowing there must be a great truth to stand so long, extend so wide, and uphold so much that is false.

CHAPTER III

THE FUNDAMENTAL AND DISTINCTIVE IDEA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH — DIVISION OF THE CHRISTIAN SECTS

All forms of conscious religion have this common point, an acknowledged sense of dependence on God, and each has some special peculiarity of its own, which distinguishes it from all others. Now the essential peculiarity of Christianity is, indeed, that moral and religious character already spoken of; * but the formal and theoretic peculiarity, which contradistinguishes it from all other religions, is this doctrine:— That God has made the highest revelation of himself to man through Jesus of Nazareth. This doctrine — which does not proceed from the absolute character, but from the historical origin of Christianity — is the common ground on which all Christian sects, the Catholic and the Quaker, the Anabaptist, the Rationalist and the Mormon, are agreed. But as this is logically affirmed by all theoretical Christians, it is as logically denied by all not-theoretical Christians. Thus the Jews and Mahometans, think their prophets superior to Jesus. When we find a man who is a higher "incarnation of God"; one who teaches and lives out more of religion and morality than Jesus, we are bound to admit that fact, and then cease to be theoretical Christians. Men may now be essential and practical Christians, if they regard Christianity as the absolute religion, and live it

* Above, Book III. Ch. III.

out; or if they live the absolute religion and give it no name, though not theoretical, may still be essential Christians.

This distinctive doctrine of Christianity appears in various forms in the different sects. Thus some call Jesus the Infinite God; others the First of Created Beings; others a Miraculous Being of a mixed nature, and hence a God-man, the identity of man and God; others still, a mortal man, the most perfect representation of goodness and religion. These may all be regarded, excepting the last, as more or less mythological statements of this distinctive doctrine.

Now if Christianity be taken for the absolute religion, with this theoretical peculiarity, and developed in a man, it has an influence on all his active powers. It affects the mind, he makes a theology; the conscience, he lives a manly life; the imagination, he devises a symbol, rite, penance, or ceremony. The theology, the life, and the symbol, must depend on the natural endowments, and artificial culture of the individual Christian, and as both gifts and the development thereof differ in different men, it is plain that various sects must naturally be formed, each of which, setting out from the first principle common to all religions, and embracing the great theoretical doctrine of Christianity, which distinguishes it from all non-Christian religions, has besides, a certain peculiar doctrine of its own which separates it from all other Christian sects. These sects are the necessary forms religion takes in connection with the varying condition of men. The Christian church as a whole is made up of these parties, all of whom, taken together, with their theologies, life and symbols, represent the amount of absolute religion which has been developed in Christen-

dom, in the speculative, practical, or æsthetic way. To understand the Christian church, therefore, we must understand each of its parties, their truth and error, their virtue and vice, and then form an appreciation of the whole matter.

In making the estimate, however, we may neglect such portions of the Christian church as have had no influence on the present development of Christianity amongst us. Thus we need not consider the Greek and Oriental churches after the sixth century, as their influence upon the rest of Christendom ceased to be considerable, in consequence of the superior practical talents of the Western churches.* The remaining portions may be classified in various ways; but, for the present purpose, the following seems the best arrangement, namely:

I. The Catholic Party.
II. The Protestant Party.
III. Those neither Catholics nor Protestants.

These three will be treated each in its turn.

* See Sermons of Theism, etc. Introduction.

CHAPTER IV

THE CATHOLIC PARTY

The Catholic church is the oldest and in numbers still the most powerful of all Christian organizations. It grew as the Christian spirit extended among the ruins of the old world, by the might of the truth borne in its bosom overpowering the old worship, the artifice of priests, the selfishness of the affluent, the might of the strong, the cherished forms of a thousand years, the impotent armies of purple kings. It rose from small beginnings. No one knows who first brought Christianity to Rome; nor who planted the seed of that hierarchic power which soon became a tree, and at length a whole forest, stretching to the world's end, enfolding chapels for the pious, and dens for robbers. The practical spirit of old Rome came into the church. Its power grew as Christian freedom declined. The mantle of that giant genius, which made the seven-hilled city conqueror of the world; the belt of power which girt the loins of her mighty men, Fabius, Regulus, Cicero, Cæsar, passed to the Christian bishops, as that genius fled from the earth, howling over his crumbled work. The spirit of those ancient heroes came into the church; their practical skill; their obstinate endurance; their power of speech with words like battles; their lust of power; their resolution which nothing could overturn, or satisfy. The Greek Christians were philosophic, literary; they could sling stones at a hair's-breadth. In the early times they had all the advantage of position; "the chairs of the apostles";

the Christian scriptures written in their tongue. Theirs were the great names of the first centuries, Polycarp, Justin, the Clements, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, the Gregories, Chrysostom. But the Latin church had the practical skill, the soul to dare, and the arm to execute: its power therefore advanced step by step. Its chiefs were dexterous men, with the coolness of Cæsar, and the zeal of Hannibal. Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, would have been powerful men anywhere — in the court of Sardanapalus, or a college of Jesuits. They brought the world into the church. 'Twas the world's gain, but the church's loss. The emperor soon learned to stoop his conquering eagles to the spiritual power, which shook the capital. The church held divided sway with him. The spiritual sceptre was wrested from his hands. Constantine fled to Byzantium as much to escape the Latin clergy as to defend himself from the warriors of the North.*

Now the Catholic church, held to the first truths of religion and of Christianity, as before shown. Its peculiar and distinctive doctrine was this, that God still acts upon and inspires mankind, being in some measure immanent therein. This doctrine is broad enough to cover the world, powerful enough to annihilate the arrogance of any church. But the Roman party limited this doctrine by adding, that God did not act by a natural law, directly on the mind and conscience, heart and soul of each man, who sought faithfully to approach him, but acted miraculously, through the or-

* See the external causes of the superiority of the Roman church, in Rehm, Geschichte des Mittelalters, Vol. I. p. 516, et seq. Constantine established public worship on Fridays and Sundays in his army, appointing priests and deacons, and providing a tent for religious purposes in every *Numerus,* Sozomen, H. E. I. C. 8.

ganization of the church on its members and no others; and on them, not because they were men, but instruments of the church; not in proportion to a man's gifts, or the use of the gifts, but as he stood high or low in the church. The humblest priest had a little inspiration, enough to work the greatest of miracles; the bishop had more; the pope, as head of the church, must be infallibly inspired, so that he could neither act wrong, think wrong, nor feel wrong.

The absolute religion and morality, necessarily sets out from the absolute source, the spirit of God in the soul revealing truth. The Catholic church, on the contrary, starts from a finite source, the limited work of inspired men, namely, the traditional word preserved in scripture and the unscriptural tradition, both written and not written. But then, laying down this indisputable truth, that a book must be interpreted by the same spirit in which it is written, and therefore that a book written by miraculous and superhuman inspiration can be understood only by men inspired in a similar way, and limiting the requisite inspiration to itself, it assumed the office of sole interpreter of the scriptures; refused the Bible to the laymen, because they, as uninspired, could not understand it, and gave them only its own interpretation. Thus it attempted to mediate between mankind and the Bible.

Then again, relying on the unscriptural tradition preserved in the fathers, the councils, the organization and memory of the church, it makes this of the same authority as the scriptures themselves, and so claims divine sanction for doctrines which are neither countenanced by "human reason," as true, nor "divine revelation," as contained in the Bible. This is a point of great importance, as it will presently appear.

Now the Catholic church was logically consistent with itself in both these pretensions. Each individual church, at first, received what scripture it saw fit, and interpreted the word as well as it could. Next the synods decreed for the mass of churches both the canon of scripture and the doctrine it contained. The Catholic church continued to exercise these privileges. Then again, taking the common notion, the church had a logical and speculative basis for its claim to inspiration, though certainly none in point of fact. If God miraculously inspired Jesus to create a new religion, Peter, Paul, and John to preach it, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke to record the words and works of Christ and of the Christians, when did the miraculous inspiration cease? With the apostles or their successors; the direct or the remote? Did it cease at all? It did not appear. Besides, how could the inspired works be interpreted except by men continually inspired; how could the church, founded and built by miraculous action, be preserved by the ordinary use of man's powers? Were Jude and James inspired and Clement and Ambrose left with no open vision? Such a conclusion could not come from a comparison of their works. Did not Jesus promise to be with his church to the end of the world? Here was the warrant for the assumptions of the catholic party. So, with logical consistency, it claimed a perpetual, miraculous, and exclusive inspiration, on just as good ground as it allowed the claim of earlier men to the same inspiration; it made tradition the master over the soul, on just the same pretension that the Bible is made the only certain rule of faith and practice. As the only interpreter of scripture, the exclusive keeper of tradition, as the vicar of God, and alone inspired by him,

it stood between man on the one side, and the Bible, Antiquity, and God, on the other side. The church was sacred, for God was immanent therein; the world profane, deserted of deity.

The church admits three sources of moral and religious truth, namely:—

1. The scriptures of the Old and New Testament and Apocrypha. It declares these are good and wise, but ambiguous and obscure, and by themselves alone incomplete, not containing the whole of the doctrine and requiring an inspired expositor to set forth their contents.

2. The unscriptural tradition, oral and written. This is needed to supply what is left wanting through the imperfection of scripture, and to teach the more recondite doctrines of Christianity, such as the trinity, redemption, the authority of the church, purgatory, intercession, the use of confession, penance, and the like, and also to explain the scriptures themselves. But tradition also is imperfect, ambiguous, full of apparent contradictions, and impossible for the laity to understand, except through the inspired class, who alone could reconcile its several parts.

3. The direct inspiration of God acting on the official members of the church; that is, on its councils, priests, and above all on its infallible head.

The church restricted direct inspiration to itself, and even within its walls the action of God was limited, for if an individual of the clerical order taught what was hostile to the doctrine of the church, or not contained therein, his inspiration was referred to the devil, not God, and the man burned, not canonized. Thus inspiration was subjected to a very severe process of

verification even within the church itself. It forbid mankind to trust reason, conscience, and the religious element; to approach God through these, and get truth at first hand, as Moses, Jesus, and the other great men of antiquity had done. For this the layman must depend on the clergy, and the clergyman must depend on the whole church, represented by the fathers or councils, and idealized in its head. Thus the church was the judge of the doctrine and the practice; invested with the keys of heaven and hell; with power to bind and loose, remit sins, or retain them, and authority to demand absolute submission from the world, or punish with fagots and hell, men who would not believe as the church commanded. In this way it would control private inspiration. But not to leave the heretics hopeless, or drive them to violence, it assumes the right to restore them, and pardon their sins, on condition of submission and penance. The Saviour, the martyrs, the saints, had not only expiated their own sins, but performed works of supererogation, and so established a sinking-fund to liquidate the sins of the world. This deposit was at the disposal of the church, who could therewith, aided by the intercession of the beatified spirits, purchase the salvation of a penitent heretic, though his sins were as crimson.

The church assumed mastery over all souls. The individual was nothing; the church was all. Its power stood on a miraculous basis; its authority was derived from God. The humblest priests, in celebrating the mass, performed a miracle greater than all the wonders of Jesus, for he only changed water into wine, and fed five thousand men with five loaves; but the priest, by a single word, changed bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Almighty God. It styles itself God's vice-

gerent on earth, and as Jesus was a temporary and partial incarnation of the deity, so itself is a perfect and eternal incarnation thereof. Thus the Christian church became a theocracy. It was far more consistent than the Jewish theocracy, for that allowed private inspiration, and therefore was perpetually troubled by the race of prophets, who never allowed the priests their own way, but cried out with most rousing indignation against the Levites and their followers, and refused to be put down. Besides, the Jewish theocracy limited infallibility to God and the law, which was to be made known to all, and though inspired could be easily understood by the simple son of Israel: it never claimed that for the priesthood.

Now there are but two scales in the balance of power: the individual who is ruled and the institution that governs, here represented by the church. Just as the one scale rises, the other falls. The spiritual freedom of the individual in the church is contained in an angle too small to be measurable. Did men revolt from this iron rule? There was the alternative of eternal damnation, for all men were born depraved, exposed to the wrath of God; their only chance of avoiding hell was to escape through the doors of the church. Thus men were morally compelled to submit for the sake of its "redemption." Did they throw themselves on the mercy of the Holy Ghost, penitent for their disobedience of the church? They were told that mercy was at the church's disposal. Did they make the appeal to scripture, and say as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive; that he had expiated all their sins? The church told them their exegesis of the passage was wrong, for Christ only expiated their inherited sin, not the actual sins they had committed, and for which

they must smart in hell, atone for in purgatory, or get pardoned by submitting to the vicar of God, and going through the rites, forms, fasts, and penances he should prescribe, and thus purchase a share of the redemption which Christ and the saints by their works of supererogation had provided to meet the case. This doctrine was taught in good faith and in good faith received.*

I. *The Merits of the Catholic Church.*

As we look back upon the history of the church and see the striking unity of that institution, we naturally suppose its chiefs had a regular plan; but such was not the fact. The peculiar merit of the Catholic church consists in its assertion of the truth, that God still inspires mankind as much as ever; that He has not exhausted himself in the creation of a Moses, or a Jesus, the law, or the gospel, but is present and active in spirit as in space: admitting this truth, so deep, so vital to the race—a truth preserved in the religions of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and above all in the Jewish faith — clothing itself with all the authority of ancient days; the word of God in its hands, both tradition and scripture; believing it had God's infallible and exclusive inspiration in its heart, for such no doubt was the real belief, and actually, through its Christian character, combining in itself the best interests of mankind, no wonder it prevailed. Its countenance became as light-

* See, who will, Rehm, ubi sup. Vol. II. p. 541, et seq., and Vol. III. p. 1, et seq., for the political aspect of the Roman church. Guizot, Histoire de la Civilization, etc. Leçon II.–VI. X.–XII. Hallam, State of Europe during the Middle Ages, ch. VII. and the admirably candid remarks thereon in his Supplementary notes. Gibbon, ubi sup. ch. XV. XVI. XVIII. XXI. Comte, ubi sup. Vol. V. Leçon, LIV. LV. who in some respects, surpasses all his predecessors.

ning. It stood and measured the earth. It drove asunder the nations. It went forth in the mingling tides of civilized corruption and barbarian ferocity, for the salvation of the people — conquering and to conquer; its brightness as the light.

It separated the spiritual from the temporal power, which had been more or less united in the theocracies of India, Egypt, and Judea, and which can only be united to the lasting detriment of mankind. This was a great merit in the church; one that cannot be appreciated in our days, for we have not felt the evil it aimed to cure. The church, in theory, stood on a basis purely moral; it rose in spite of the state; in the midst of its persecutions. At first it shunned all temporal affairs, and never allowed a temporal power to be superior to itself. The department of political action belonged to the state; that of intellectual and religious action, the stablest and strongest of power, — to the church. Hence its care of education; hence the influence it exerted on literature. We read the letters of Ambrose and Augustine and find a spirit all unknown to former times.* Tertullian could oppose the whole might of the state with his pen. That fierce African did not hesitate to exhibit the crimes of the nation. The apologetists assume a tone of spiritual authority surprising in that age.

The church set apart a speculative class, distinct from all others, including the most cultivated men of their times. It provided a special education for this class, one most admirably adapted, in many points, for the work they were to do. Piety and genius found

* See this point ably though briefly treated in Schlosser, ubi sup. Vol. III. Pt. III. p. 102–151, and IV. p. 25–75. See also Pt. II. p. 167, et seq.

here an asylum, a school, and a broad arena. Thus it had a troop of superior minds, educated and pious men, who could not absorb the political power, as the sacerdotal class of India, Egypt, and Judea had done; who could not be indifferent to the social and moral condition of mankind, as the priesthood had been in Greece and Rome. Theoretically, they were free from the despotism of one, and the indifference of the other. The public virtue was their peculiar charge.

Ancient Rome was the city of organizations, and practical rules. Nowhere was the individual so thoroughly subordinated to the state. War, science, and lust, of old time, had here incarnated themselves. The same practical spirit organized the church, with its dictator, its senate, and its legions. The discipline of the clerical class, their union, zeal, and commanding skill gave them the solidity of the phalanx, and the celerity of the legion. The church prevailed as much by its organization as its doctrine. What could a band of loose-girt apostles, each warring on his own account, avail against the refuge of lies, where strength and sin had intrenched themselves, and sworn never to yield? An organized church was demanded by the necessities of the time; an association of soldiers called for an army of saints.* A sensual people required forms, the church gave them; superstitious rites, divination, processions, images, the church,— obdurate as steel when occasion demands, but pliant as molten metal when yielding is required — the church allowed all this. Its form grew out of the wants of the time and place.

Was there no danger that the priesthood, thus able and thus organized, should become ambitious of wealth

* See Guizot und Comte.

and power? The greatest danger that fathers should seek to perpetuate authority for their children. But this class of men, cut off from posterity by the prohibition of marriage, lived in the midst of ancient and feudal institutions, where all depended on birth; where descent from a successful pirate, or some desperate freebooter, hardhanded and hardhearted, who harried village after village, secured a man elevation, political power, and wealth; the clergy were cut off from the most powerful of all inducements to accumulate authority. In that long period from Alaric to Columbus, when the church had ample revenues; the most able and cultivated men in her ranks, so thoroughly disciplined; the awful power over the souls of men, far more formidable than bayonets skillfully plied; with an acknowledged claim to miraculous inspiration and divine authority, were it not for the celibacy of the Christian priesthood — damnable institution, and pregnant with mischief as it was — we should have had a sacerdotal caste, the Levites of Christianity, whose little finger would have been thicker than the loins of all former Levites; who would have flayed men with scorpions, where the priestly despots of Egypt and India only touched them with a feather, and the dawn of a better day must have been deferred for thousands of years. The world is managed wiser than some men fancy. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain," said an old writer. The remedy of inveterate evils is attended with sore pangs. These wretched priests of the middle ages bore a burden, and did a service for us, which we are slow to confess.

The church, reacting against the sensuality and excessive publicity of the heathen world, in its establish-

ment of convents and monasteries, opened asylums for delicate spirits that could not bear the rage of savage life; afforded a hospital for men sick of the fever of the world, worn-out and shattered in the storms of state, who craved a little rest for charity's sweet sake, before they went where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Among the sensual the saint is always an anchorite; religion gets as far as possible from the world.* Rude men require obvious forms and sensible shocks to their roughness. The very place where the monks prayed and the nuns sang, was sacred from the ruthless robber. As he drew near it, the tiger was tame within him; the mailed warrior kissed the ground, and religion awoke for the moment in his heart. The fear of hell, and reverence for the consecrated spot, chained up the devil for the time.

Then the church had a most diffusive spirit; it would Christianize as fast as the state would conquer; its missionaries were found in the courts of barbarian monarchs, in the caves and dens of the savage, diffusing their doctrine and singing their hymns. Creating an organization the most perfect the world ever saw; with a policy wiser than any monarch had dreamed of, and which grew more perfect with the silent accretions of time; with address to allure the ambitious to its high places, and so turn all their energy into its deep wide channel; with mysteries to charm the philosophic, and fill the fancy of the rude; with practical doctrines for earnest workers, and subtle questions, always skilfully left open for men of acute discernment; with rites and ceremonies that addressed every sense, rousing the mind like a Grecian drama, and promising a participa-

* To illustrate this point see, *instar omnium,* the works of St. Bernard.

tion with God through the sacrament; with wisdom enough to bring men really filled with religion into its ranks; with good sense and good taste to employ all the talent of the times in the music, the statues, the painting, the architecture of the temple, thus consecrating all the powers of man to man's noblest work; with so much of Christian truth as the world in its wickedness could not forget — no wonder the church spread wide her influence; sat like a queen among the nations, saying to one GO, and it went, to another COME, and it came.

Then, again, its character, in theory, was kindly and humane. It softened the asperity of secular wars; forbid them in its sacred seasons; established its truce of God, and gave a chance for rage to abate. Against the king, it espoused the cause of the people. Coming in the name of one "despised and rejected of men," "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" of a man born in an ox's crib, at his best estate not having where to lay his head; who died at the hangman's hand, but who was at last seated at the right hand of God, and in his low estate was deemed God in humiliation come down into the flesh, to take its humblest form, and show He was no respecter of persons,— the church did not fail to espouse the cause of the people, with whom Christianity found its first adherents, its apostles, and defenders. With somewhat in its worst days of the spirit of Him who gave His life a ransom for many; with much of it really active in its best days and its theory at all times, the church stood up, for long ages, the only bulwark of freedom; the last hope of man struggling but sinking as the whelming waters of barbarism whirled him round and round. It came to the baron, haughty of soul, and bloody of hand,

who sat in his cliff-tower, a hungry giant; who broke the poor into fragments, ground them to powder, and spurned them like dust from his foot; it came between him and the captive, the serf, the slave, the defenceless maiden, and stayed the insatiate hand. Its curse blasted as lightning. Even in feudal times, it knew no distinction of birth; all were "conceived in sin," "shapen in inquity," alike the peasant and the peer. The distinction of birth, station, was apparent, not real. Yet were all alike children of God, who judged the heart, and knew no man's person; all heirs of heaven, for whom prophets and apostles had uplifted their voice; yes, for whom God had worn this weary, wasting weed of flesh, and died a culprit's death. Then while nothing but the accident of distinguished birth, or the possession of animal fierceness, could save a man from the collar of the thrall, the church took to her bosom all who gave signs of talent and piety; sheltered them in their monasteries; ordained them as her priests; welcomed them to the chair of St. Peter; and men who from birth would have been companions of the Galilean fisherman, sat on the spiritual throne of the world, and governed with a majesty which Cæsar might envy, but could not equal. Priests came up from no Levitical stock, but the children of captives and bondmen as well as prince and peer. When northern barbarism swept over the ancient world; when temple and tower went to the ground, and the culture of old time, its letters, science, arts, were borne off before the flood,— the church stood up against the tide; shed oil on its wildest waves; cast the seed of truth on its waters, and as they gradually fell, saw the germ send up its shoot, which growing while men watch and while they sleep, after many days, bears its hundred-fold, a

civilization better than the past, and institutions more beneficent and beautiful.

The influence of the church is perhaps greater than even its friends maintain. It laid its hand on the poor and downtrodden; they were raised, fed and comforted. It rejected, with loathing, from its coffers, wealth got by extortion and crime. It touched the shackles of the slave, and the serf arose disenthralled, the brother of the peer. It annihilated slavery, which Protestant cupidity would keep forever.* It touched the diadem of a wicked king, and it became a crown of thorns; the monarch's sceptre was a broken reed before the crosier of the church.† Its rod, like the wand of Moses, swallowed up all hostile rods. Like God himself, the church gave, and took away, rendering no reason to man for its gifts or extortions. It sent missionaries to the east and the west, and carried the waters of baptism from the fountains of Nubia, to the roaring

* See, in Comte, ubi sup. Vol. V. p. 407, et seq., some Reflections on the milder character of Slavery in *Catholic* America, compared with Slavery in *Protestant* America; and yet Comte is hardly a theist. For the influence of Christianity on slavery, see the accounts of Paulinus, Deogratias, Patiens, and Synesius, in Schlosser, Vol. III. Part III. p. 284, et seq. Gibbon, in his heartless way, passes over with scarce a notice, the beautiful spirit Christianity brought into Rome, and its influence on the condition of slaves. Hallam makes but a one-sided appreciation of the Catholic church, and it seems to me has not done justice to its merits. But see what ample amends he makes in the supplementary notes. Bp. England, Letters to Hon. John Forsyth; Balt. 1844, labors to show that the Catholic church has been the uncompromising *friend of slavery*. He certainly makes out a strong case, though not without a little suppression of the truth, as it seems to me.

† See an early instance of the collision between the spiritual and temporal power in the case of Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, and the Queen Justina, in Fleury, ubi sup. Liv. XVIII. Chap. 32, et seq.; and also in Gibbon, Chap. XXVII.

geysers of a northern isle. It limited the power of kings; gave religious education to the people, which no ancient institution ever aimed to impart; kept on its sacred hearth the smoldering embers of Greek or Roman thought; cherished the last faint sparkles of that fire Prometheus brought from gods more ancient far than Jove. It had ceremonies for the sensual; confessionals for the pious — needed and beautiful in their time — labors of love for the truehearted; pictures and images to rouse devotion in the man of taste; temples whose aspiring turrets and sombre vaults filled the kneeling crowd with awe; it had doctrines for the wise; rebukes for the wicked; prayers for the reverent; hopes for the holy, and blessings for the true. It sanctified the babe, newly born and welcome; watched over marriage with a jealous eye; fostered good morals; helped men, even by its symbols, to partake the Divine nature; smoothed the pillow of disease and death, giving the soul wings, as it were, to welcome the death-angel, and gently, calmly, pass away. It assured masculine piety of its reward in heaven; told the weak and wavering, that Divine beings would help him, if faithful. In the honors of canonization, it promised the most lasting fame on earth; generations to come should call the good man a blessed saint, and his name never perish while Christian year went round. Heroism of the soul took the place of boldness in the flesh. It did not, like polytheism, deify warriors and statesmen — Attila, Theodosius, Clovis, their kingdom was of this world; but it canonized martyrs and saints, Polycarp, Justin, Ambrose, Paulinus, Bernard of Clairvaux.*

* Canonization among the Catholics seems to come from the same root with the Apotheosis of the Polytheists. Both, no

Such were some of the excellences, theoretical or practical, of the church. This hasty sketch does not allow more particular notice of them.

II. *The Defects and Vices of the Catholic Party.*

But the church had vices, vast and awful to the thought. As its distinctive excellence was to proclaim the continuance of inspiration, so its sacramental sin was in limiting this inspiration to itself, thus setting bounds to the spirit of God and the soul of man. Who shall say to the Infinite God, hitherto shalt Thou come, but no further; Thou hast inspired Moses and Jesus, the apostles, and the church; well done! now rest from thy work, and speak no more, except as we prescribe? The church did say it.

The wondrous mechanism of the church and much of its power came from this false assumption, that it alone had the word of God. So its organization was based on a lie, and required new lies to uphold, and prophets of lies to defend it. Its servants, the priests, became proud of spirit. The only keepers of Scripture and tradition; the only recipients of inspiration, they forbid free inquiry as of no use; stifled Conscience as only leading men into trouble; and excommunicated Common Sense, who asked "terrible questions," calling for the title deeds of the church. They went further, and forbid the bans between Reason and Religion; and when the parties insisted on the union, turned them both out of doors with a curse. The laity must not approach God, as the clergy; must only commune with Him "in one kind." The church forgot that God grants inspiration to no one except on condition he con-

doubt, exerted an influence on men who asked a recompense for being good and religious.

forms to the divine law, living pure and true, and grants it only in proportion to his gifts and his use thereof: so, relying on the office and "apostolical succession" for inspiration, the priests lived shameless and wicked lives, rivalling Sardanapalus and Domitian in their cruelty and sin. They forgot that God withholds inspiration from none that is faithful; so they stoned the prophets who rebuked their lies and published their sin; they shamefully entreated men whom God sent of his errands to these unworthy husbandmen. They became spiritual tyrants, forcing all men to utter the same creed, submit to the same rite, reverence the same symbol, and be holy in the same way.

In its zeal to separate the spiritual power from temporal hands it took what was not its own — power over men's bodies; and made laws for the state.* In its haste to give preëminence to spiritual things, it made its office a bribe, greater than the state could give. The honor of sainthood — what was the fame of king and conqueror to that? It promised the rewards of high clerical office, and even of canonization to the most mercenary and cruel of men, whose touch was pollution. Its list of saints is full of knaves and despots. The state was taken into the church, — a refractory member. The Flesh and the Devil were baptized; "took holy orders;" governed the church in some cases, but were still the Flesh and the Devil, though called by a Christian name. That divine man, whose name is ploughed into the world, said, If a man smite the one cheek, turn the other; but if a man lifted his hand or voice against the church, — it blasted him with damnation and hell. Christ said his kingdom was not of this world; so said the church at first, and

* See Hallam, ubi supra, Chap. VII.

Christians refused to war, to testify in the courts, to appear in the theatres, and foul their hands with the world's sin. But soon as there was an organized priesthood, to defend themselves from the tyranny of the state, to exercise authority over the souls of men, power on the earth became needed. One lie leads to many. What the church first took in self-defence it afterwards clung to and increased, and was so taken up with its earthly kingdom, it quite forgot its patrimony in Heaven; so it played a double game, attempting to serve God, and keep on good terms with the Devil. But it was once said, "no man can serve two masters." Unnatural, spiritual power could not be held without temporal authority to sustain it; so the church took fleshly weapons for its carnal ends. Monks raised armies; bishops led them; God was blasphemed by prayers to aid bloodshed. The church sold her garment to buy a sword.

The Church was the exclusive vicar of God; she must have "the tonnage and poundage of all free-spoken truth." To accomplish this end and establish her dogmas, she slew men, beginning with Priscillian and "the six Gnostics," in the fourth century, at Triers, and ending no one knows where, or when, or with whom.* It had such zeal for the "unity of the faith," that it put prophets in chains; asked the sons of God if they were "greater than Jacob." It made Belief take the place of Life. It absolved men of

* See the story, in Sulpitius Severus, Hist. Sac. Lib. II. Ch. 50–51. Fleury, ubi supra, Liv. XVII. Ch. 56, 57, and XVIII. Ch. 29, 30. The Pope St. Leo commended the action, but Gregory of Tours, and Ambrose of Milan condemned it. Idacius and Ithacius, the two bishops who caused the execution, were expelled from their office by the popular indignation. See Jerome, Illust. virorum, C. 122, et seq.

sins, past, present, and future, emancipated the clergy from the secular law, thus giving them license to sin. It sold heaven to extortioners for a little gold, and built St. Peters with the spoil. It wrung ill-gotten gains out of tyrants on their death-bed; devoured the houses of widows and the weak; built its cathedrals out of the spoil of orphans, thus literally giving a stone when bread was asked for, as St. Bernard honestly called it.* It was greedy of gold and power, and at one time had wellnigh half the lands of England held in mortmain. It absolved men from oaths; broke marriages; told lies; forged charters and decretals; burned the philosophers; corrupted the classics; altered the words of the Fathers; changed the decisions of the councils, and filled Europe with its falsehood.† It has fought the most hideous of wars; evangelized nations with the sword; laid kingdoms under interdict to gratify its pride.

The Church boasts of its uniform doctrine, but it changes every age; of its peaceful spirit, but who fought the crusades, the wars of extermination in Switzerland, France, the Low Countries? To whom must we set down the ecclesiastical butchery that filled Europe with funeral piles? It quarreled with the temporal power, and built up institutions of tyranny to suppress truth; kept the Bible to itself; made the

* Dante touchingly complains of the evil which Constantine brought on the church *by the gifts which the first wealthy pope received of him!* Inferno. XIX. 115, et seq.

† See instances of this forgery in Hallam, ubi sup. Ch. VII. p. 391, et seq. et al., ed. Paris; Daillé, on the right Use of the Fathers, etc.; London, 1841, passim. Middleton, ubi supra. But see, on the side of the church, Bossuet, Defense de la Tradition et des Saints Pères, and Manzoni, Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica; Firenze, 1835.

Greek Testament a prohibited book; brought dead men's bones into the temples, for the living to worship, and worked lying wonders to confirm false doctrine. It loved the night of the Dark Ages, and clung to its old dogmas.

The Church came at length to be a colossus of crime, with a thin veil of hypocrisy drawn over its face, and that only. The vow of purity its children took, became a license for sin. The corruptest of courts was the court of the Pope. What reverence had the Archbishops for the dictrine of the church? Cardinal Bembo bid Sadolet not read St. Paul, it would spoil his taste. In early ages the apostles were the devoutest of men; in later days their "successors" were steeped to the lips in crime.*

For centuries, the church, like the Berserkers of northern romance, seemed to possess the soul and strength of each antagonist it slew. But its hour struck. The work it required ten centuries to mature, stood in its glory not one. Each transient institution has a truth, or it would not be; an error, or it would stand forever. The truth opens men's eyes; they see the error and would reject it. Then comes the perpetual quarrel between the Old and the New. "Every battle of the warrior," says an ancient prophet, "is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;" but the battle of the church was a devouring flame.

* See Hallam, ubi sup. ch. VII. De Potter loves to dwell on the faults of the church, for which there is sufficient opportunity; Neander, as much too lenient, errs on the other side. Much information in a popular form may be found in M. Roux-Ferrand, Histoire des Progrés de la Civilization en Europe, 6 vols. 8vo.; Paris, 1833–1841, Vol. I.–II. Leçons X.–XII. Vol. III. Ch. IV.–VI. Vol. IV. Ch. V.–VII., et al., and Mrs. Child's Religious Ideas; N. Y. 1855, Vols. II. and III.

In the time of Boniface VIII., or about the end of the fourteenth century, an eye that read the signs of the times, and saw the cloud and the star below the horizon, could have foretold the downfall of the church. Its brightest hour was in the day of Innocent III. A wise Providence governs the affairs of men, and never suffers the leaf to fall till the swelling bud crowds it off. Out of the ashes of the old institution there springs up a new being, soon as the world can give it place. No institution is normal and ultimate. It has but its day, and never lasts too long nor dies too soon. Judaism and Heathenism nursed and swaddled mankind for Christianity, which came in the fulness of time. The Catholic Church rocked the cradle of mankind. In due season, like a jealous nurse, assiduous and meddlesome, but grown ill-tempered with age and disgust of new things, she yields up with reluctance her rebellious charge, whose vagaries her frowns and stripes will not restrain; whose struggling weight, her withered arms are impotent to bear; whose aspiring soul her anicular and maudlin wit cannot understand. Her promise will not coax; nor her baubles bribe; nor her curses affright him more. The stripling child will walk alone.

The Protestant "Reformation" came from the action of ideas which had not justice done them in the Catholic Church, just as the Christian Reformation from ideas not sufficiently represented in Judaism and Heathenism. It did not, more than the other, come all at once. There was "Lutheranism" before Luther, as Christianity before Christ. Slowly the ages prepared for both, for each was a point in the development of man. The church educated man to see her faults; gave them weapons to attack her. The Reformation

was long a gathering in the bosom of the church itself.* Athanasius had his Arius to contend with. There was always some Paul of Samosata, some Theodore of Mopsuestia, some Peter of Bruis, or Henry of Lausanne, to trouble the church. In the twelfth century it took all the miracles of Clairvaux and the leanness of its Abbot, to put down heretics, who would come up again. Was there not Waldo in France, Arnold of Brescia, in the papal state, John Huss at Constance, and Wicliff in England, and all of them at no great distance of time? Faustus and Gutenberg did more for the Reformation than the Diet at Worms. Luther, and Zwingle, and Calvin, and the host of great men who grew in their shadow, were only the heralds that blew the trumpet of the reformation, its prize-fighters, not directors of the movement. It was the God of nations that moved the world's heart. The Spirit only culminated in Luther and his friends. It burned in holy souls in Bohemia and Languedoc, and the valleys of the Pyrenees, and the mountains of Tyrol; it breathed in lofty minds at Paris, Saxony, Padua, London, Rome itself. Every learned Greek the Turks frighted from Constantinople, or Italian wealth lured to the queen of cities; every manuscript of the classics, the fathers, the councils, the scriptures which found deliverance from the moles and the bats; every improvement in law, science, and art; every discovery in alchemy or astrology; every invention from the mariner's compass to monk Schwartz's gunpowder, was an agent of the Reformation. We find reformers, from the time of Marcion to John Wessel.

* Ranke in his Die römischen Päbste, etc. im 16, und 17 Jahrhundert, gives abundant proof of this reformatory movement in the church itself. See particularly Vol. I. B. II., but the tale of ecclesiastical *crime* is even more distinctly told.

Some tried, as in the time of Jesus, to put new wine in old bottles, but losing both, looked round for new things. That long train of Mystics, from Dionysius the Areopagite, to Meister Eckart of Strassburg, prepared for the work which Luther built up with manly shouting.

To sum up the claim of this party; the Catholic Church is based on the assumption that God inspires that church, miraculously and exclusively. This assumption is false. Though the oldest organization in the world, it has no right over the soul of man.*

* See, who will, the Roman doctrine thoroughly attacked in the ponderous folio of Joh. Gerhard, Confessio Catholica, etc., etc.; Frankfort, 1679; and the superficial and somewhat one-sided essay of M. Bouvet, Du Catholicisme, du Protestantisme, et de la Philosophie en France; Paris, 1840. But see the attack of Simmichius on Protestantism, Confessionistarum Goliathismus profligatus, etc., etc.; Louvan, 1657. Many of the most important claims of the Catholic church, that of supremacy in temporal affairs, infallibility in spiritual matters, and the right to enforce doctrines, are abandoned by an able Catholic writer, J. H. Von Wessenberg, the late bishop of Constance. See his Die grossen Kirchenversammlungen des 15ten und 16ten Jahrhundert; Const. 1840, 4 vol. 8vo.

CHAPTER V

THE PROTESTANT PARTY

The distinctive idea of Protestantism is this: the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the direct word of God, and therefore, the only infallible rule of religious faith and practice. It logically denied that an inspired man was needed to stand between mankind and the inspired word. Each man must consult the scriptures for himself; expound them for himself, by the common rules of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Each man, therefore, must have freedom of conscience up to this point, but no further. God was immanent in the scriptures; not in the church. The ecclesiastical tradition was no better than other tradition. It might, or it might not, be true. The Catholic Church had no miraculous inspiration.

Now it was a great step for the human race, to make this assertion in the sixteenth century; it demanded no little manhood to do so at that time. Where were the men who had made it in the sixth, and all subsequent centuries? Their bones and their disgrace paved the highway on which Luther walked as a giant to a fame world-wide and abiding. At first the work of the Protestants, like that of all reformers, was negative, exposing the errors and sins of the Catholic party; clearing the spot on which to erect their church; fighting with words and blows. In the war of the giants, sore strokes must be laid on. The ground shook and the sky rang with the quarrel. "God will see," said stout Martin, "which gives out first, the Pope or Luther."

The church thundered and lightened from the seven-hilled city looking with a frown towards Saxony. Luther gave back thunder for thunder, scorn for scorn. Did the church condemn Luther? He paid it back in the same pence. The church says, "Luther is a heretic, and should be burned had we skill to catch him." Luther declares "the Pope is a wolf possessed with the devil, and we ought to raise the hue and cry, and tear him to pieces without judge or jury."

I. *The Merit of Protestantism.*

Its merit as a reformation was both negative and positive. It was right in declaring the Roman Church, with its clergy, cardinals, councils, popes, no more inspired than other men, and therefore no more fit than others to keep tradition, expound scripture, and hold the keys of Heaven; nay, more, that by reason of their prejudice, ignorance, sloth, ambition, crime, and sin in general, they had less inspiration, for they had grieved away the spirit of God. It was right in denying the authority of the church in temporal matters; in declaring that its tradition was no better than other tradition, nay, was even less valuable, for the church had told lies in the premises, and the fact was undeniable. The Protestants justified their words in this matter by exposing the weak points of the church, its lies, false doctrines, and wicked practices; its arrogance and worldly ambition; the disagreement of the popes; the contraditions of the councils and fathers, and the crimes of the clergy, who make up the church. It was right in examining the canon of scripture, casting off what was apocryphal, or spurious; in demanding that the laity should have the Bible and the sacraments in full, and claim the right to interpret scripture, reject

tradition, relics, saints, and having nothing between them and Christ or God. It was right in demanding freedom of conscience for all men, up to the point of accepting the scriptures.* This was no vulgar merit, but one we little appreciate. The men who fight the battle for all souls, rarely get justice from the world.

II. *The Vice and Defect of Protestantism.*

Its capital vice was to limit the power of private inspiration, and, since there must be somewhere a standard external or within us, to make the Bible master of the soul. Theoretically, it narrowed the sources of religious truth, and instead of three, as the Catholics, it gave us but one; though practically it did more than the Catholics, for it brought men directly to one fountain of truth.† Now if the Catholic had an undue reverence for the organized church, so had the Protestant for the scriptures. Both sought in the world of concrete things an infallible source and standard of

* It is not necessary to cite the proofs of the above statements from the reformers, as they may be seen in the dogmatical writers so often referred to before. However, the most significant passages may be found collected in Harles, Theologische Encyclopädie und Methodologie; Leips. 1837, Chap. III. IV. The early reformers differ in opinion as to the authority of the Bible. It is well known with what freedom and contempt Luther himself spoke of parts of the canon, and the stories of miracles in the Gospels and Pentateuch. But his own opinion fluctuated on this as on many other points. He cared little for Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Indeed, it would not require a very perverse ingenuity to make out, from the reformers, a *Straussianismus ante Straussium.*

† This is, logically speaking, the fundamental principle of the reformers, though qualifications of it may be found in Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingle, and Calvin, which detract much from its scientific rigor. But still the principle was laid down at the bottom of the Protestant fabric, and is yet a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to free men.

moral and religious truth. There is none such out of human consciousness; neither in the church, nor the Bible. Both must be idealized to support this pretension. Accordingly as the one party idealized the church: assumed its divine origin, its infallibility, and the exclusive immanence of God therein; so the other assumed the divine origin of the scriptures, their infallibility, and the exclusive immanence of God in them. Has either party proved its point? Neither is capable of proof. As the Catholic maintained, in the very teeth of notorious facts, that there was no contradiction in the doctrines of the church, its popes and councils, and more eminent fathers; in the very face of reason, that all its doctrines were true and divine; so did the Protestant, in the teeth of facts equally notorious, deny there was any contradition in the doctrines of the Bible, its prophets, evangelists, apostles; in the very face of reason, declared that every word of scripture was the word of God, and eternally true! Nay, more, the Protestants maintained that the record of scripture was so sacred, that a divine providence watched over it and kept all errors from the manuscript. What a cry the Protestants made about the "various readings." Could Cappellus get his book on the textual variations of the Old Testament printed under Protestant favor? A perpetual miracle, said Protestantism, kept the text of the Old Testament and New Testament from the smallest accident. But that doctrine would not stand against the noble army of various readings — thirty thousand strong.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." The Protestants, denying there was inspiration now as in Paul's time, yet knowing they must have religious truth or the word of God, clung like dying men to the

letter of the Bible, as their only hope. The words of the Bible had but one meaning, not many; that was to be got at by the usual methods — pious and honest study of the grammatical, logical, rhetorical sense thereof.* With its word, man must stop, for he has reached the fountainhead. But has the word of God become a letter; is all truth in the Bible, and is no error, no contradition therein? Was the doctrine once revealed to the saints, revealed once for all? Is the Bible a finality, and man only provisional? So said Protestantism. This was its vice. But God has set one thing against another, so that all work together for good. It was a great step to get back to the Bible, and freedom of conscience, and good sense in its exposition.

Protestantism wrought wonders, and overthrew the magicians in the Egypt of the church. It saw the ecclesiastical Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, with destruction opening its hungry jaws to devour them. But it had a mixed multitude in its own train, and left the people in the wilderness, wandering like the Gibeonites, with no power to get bread from heaven, or water from the living rock. Its Jethros were philologists who knew nothing of the spiritual land of hills and brooks, and milk and honey. Its leaders — men noble as Moses, men of vast soul, and Herculean power to do and suffer, to speak and be silent — had a Pis-

* Chemnitz, Loci communes, Pt. III. p. 235, et al. denounces the doctrine of the church, that the Bible was "imperfect, insufficient, ambiguous, and obscure." Luther and Melanchthon condemn the old practice of *allegorizing* scripture. See the passages collected in Harles, ubi sup. p. 133, et seq. and the dogmatical writers above referred to, Strauss, Glaubenslehre, § 12, 13, Seckendorf, De Lutheranismo, etc.; ed. 1688, p. 10, 38, 130, 74. But on the other side, see Gazzaniga, ubi sup. Vol. I. p. 171, et seq.

gah view of the land of promise, and wished God would put his spirit on all the people; but they died and gave no sign. The nations are still wandering in the desert; carrying the sanctuary, the ark, the table of the law; sometimes sighing after the leeks and garlics left behind; now and then worshipping a calf of gold, of parchment, or spoken wind; murmuring and rebellious; with here and there a Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rising up in their ranks, clouds enough, but with no Moses nor pillar of fire. Still, God be praised, we are no longer slaves under the iron bondage of the church. They were MEN who dared to come out, those heroes of the reformation. This protest against the Roman Church, was one of the noblest the world ever saw; perhaps never surpassed but once, and then by a single soul, big as yesterday, to-day, and forever. Stout-hearted Martin Luther, with his face rugged, homely, and honest, with a soul of fire, and words like cannon-shot, a heart that feared neither pope nor devil, and a living faith which sang in his dungeon:— "The lord our God is a castle strong,"— the greatest of the prophets and the "chiefest of apostles," seems little to him. We may thank God and take courage, remembering that such men have been, and may be. There is no tyranny like the spiritual — that of soul over soul, no heroism like that which breaks the bonds of such tyranny. You shall find men thick as acorns in autumn, who will wade neck-deep in blood, and charge up to the cannon's mouth, when it rains shot as snow-flakes at Christmas. Such men may be had for red coats and dollars, and "fame." It requires only vulgar bravery for that, and men who are "food for powder." But to oppose the institution which your fathers loved in centuries gone by; to sweep off

the altars, forms, and usages that ministered to your mother's piety, helped her bear the bitter ills and cross of life, and gave her winged tranquillity in the hour of death; to sunder your ties of social sympathy; destroy the rites associated with the aspiring dream of childhood, and its earliest prayer, and the sunny days of youth — to disturb these because they weave chains, invisible but despotic, which bind the arm and fetter the foot, and confine the heart; to hew down the hoary tree under whose shadow the nations played their game of life, and found in death the clod of the valley sweet to their weary bosom,— to destroy all this because it poisons the air and stifles the breath of the world — it is a sad and a bitter thing; it makes the heart throb, and the face, that is hard as iron all over in public, weeps in private, weak woman's tears it may be. Such trials are not for vulgar souls; they feel not the riddle of the world. The vulgar church — it will do for them, for it bakes bread, and brews beer. Would you more? No. That is enough for blind mouths. Duty, freedom, truth, a divine life, what are they? Trifles no doubt to monk Tetzel, the Leos and Bembos, and other sleek persons, new and old. But to a heart that swells with religion, like the Atlantic, pressed by the wings of the storm, they are the real things of God, for which all poor temporalities of fame, ease and life are to be cast to the winds. It is needful that a man be true; not that he live. Are men dogs, that they must be happy? Luther dared to be undone.

The sacramental error of Protestantism in restricting private judgment to the doctrines of the Bible, was in part neutralized by admitting freedom of indi-

vidual conscience, and therefore the right and the duty to interpret the Bible. Here it allowed great latitude. Each man might determine by historical evidence his own canon of scripture, in some measure, and devise his own method of interpretation. Yet the old spirit of the church was still there, to watch over the exegesis. The Bible was found very elastic, and therefore hedges were soon set about it, in the shape of symbolical books, creeds, thirty-nine articles, catechisms, and confessions of faith, which cooped up the soul in narrower limits. But these formularies, like the scriptures, were found also indefinite, and would hold the most opposite doctrines, for though the schoolmen doubted whether two similar spirits could occupy at once the same point of space, it is put beyond a doubt that two very dissimilar doctrines may occupy the same words, at the same time. Taking "substance for doctrine," any creed may be subscribed to, and a solemn ecclesiastical farce continue to be enacted, as edifying if not so entertaining as the old miracle-plays. That was popular advice for theologians which the old Jesuit gave: "Let us fix our own meaning to words, and then subscribe them." The maxim is still "as good as new."

This new and exclusive reverence for the Bible led to popular versions of it; to a hard study of its original tongues; and a most diligent examination of all the means of interpreting its words. Here a wide field was opened for a critical study, which even yet has not been thoroughly explored. A host of theological scholars sprang up, armed to the teeth with Greek and "the terrible Hebrew," and attended by a Babylonian legion of oriental tongues and rabbinical studies, — scholars who had no peers in the church, at

least, since the time of Jerome, who translated, so he says, the book of Tobit from Chaldaic in a day! But this study led to extravagance. Sound principles of interpretation were advanced by some of the reformers, but they were soon abandoned. Thus, to take a single example: Luther, Zwingle, and Melanchthon said, a passage of Scripture can have but one meaning.* It is unquestionably true. But certain doctrines must be maintained, and defended by scripture; therefore if this could not be done by natural meaning of scripture, a secondary sense or a type must be sought. Of course it was found. The old allegorical way of interpretation was bad, but this typical improvement and doctrine of secondary senses was decidedly worse.† In the hands of both Protestant and Catholic interpreters, the Bible is clay, to be turned into any piece of ecclesiastical pottery the case may require; persecuted in one sense they flee into another. It is a very Proteus, and takes all forms at pleasure. Now it is a river placid as starlight, then a lion roaring for his prey. Job went through some troubles in his life, as the poem relates; but even death has not placed him where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest, professors and critics have handled him more sorely than Satan, his friends, or his wife. They have made him "sin with his lips;" his saddest disease he has caught at their hands; his greatest calamity was his exposition. "Oh that mine adversary had written a book," said the patient man. Did he wish to explain it? Then

* Luther himself did not always adhere to this rule in explaining the Old Testament.

† See Strauss, Leben Jesu, § 3–4. Palfrey, ubi sup. Vol. II. Lect. XXXIII. Rosenmüller, Handbuch für Literatur der bib. Kritik, etc. Vol. IV. p. 1, et seq.

is he rightly treated, for the explainers have ploughed upon his back; they made long their furrows. Moses, says the Hebrew Scripture, was the most tormented of all the earth, but his trials in the wilderness were nothing to his sufferings on the rack of exegesis, The critics and truth have disputed over him as the Devil and Michael, but not without railing. The prophets had a hard time of it in their day and generation; but Jeremiah was put into his darkest dungeon by Christian scholars; Isaiah was never so painfully sawn asunder as by the interpreters, to whom facts are as no facts, and one day as a thousand years, in their chronology. Jonah and Daniel were never in such fatal jeopardy as at the present day. A choleric man in the Psalms could not curse his foes, but he uttered maledictions against "the enemies of the church;" nor speak of recovering from illness, but "he predicts an event which took place a thousand years later." A young Hebrew could not write an Anacreontic, but he spoke "of the church and Christ." Nay, Daniel, Paul, and John must predict the "abomination of Rome;" all the great events as they take place, and even the end of the world, in the day some fanatical interpreter happens to live. Is the Bible the Protestant standard of faith? Then it is more uncertain than the things to be measured. The cloud in Hamlet is not more variable than the "infallible rule" in the hands of the interpreters. The best things are capable of the worst abuse. Alas, when shall science and religion have their place with the sons of men?

Now since Protestantism denied the immanence of God in the church, as such, and flouted the claim to

inspiration when made by any modern, it is plain there could be no one authoritative church; all qualitatively were equal, resting on the same foundation. Then admitting freedom of judgment, within the limits of the Bible, and great latitude in expounding that; not very often burning men for heresy, — though cases enough in point might easily be cited, — and encouraging great activity of mind, it led to diversity of opinions, sentiments and practice. This began in the reformers themselves. Religion took different shapes in Ulrich von Hutten and John Calvin. Men obeyed their natural affinities, and grouped themselves into sects, each of which recognizing the great principle of all religion; the special doctrine of Christianity; the peculiar dogma of Protestantism, has also some distinctive tenet of its own. Soon as the outward pressure of papal hostility was somewhat lightened, these conflicting elements separated into several churches. Now neglecting those, with which we in New England have little to do, the rest may be divided into two parties, namely: —

I. Those who set out from the idea that God is a sovereign.

II. Those who set out from the idea that God is a father.

The theology and ethics, the virtue and vice of each, require a few words.

I.

The Party that sets out from the Sovereignty of God.

This party takes the supernatural view before pointed out. It makes God an awful king. The universe shudders at his presence. The thunder and

earthquake are but faint whispers of his wrath, as the magnificence of earth and sky is but one ray out from the heaven of his glory. He sits in awful state. Human flesh quails at the thought of him. It is terrible to fall into his hands, as fall we must. Man was made not to be peaceful and blessed, but to serve the selfishness of the All-King, to glorify God and to praise him. Originally, man was made pure and upright. But in order to tempt beyond his strength the frail creature he had made, God forbid him the exercise of a natural inclination, not evil in itself. Man disobeyed the arbitrary command. He "fell." His first sin brought on him the eternal vengeance of the all-powerful King; hurled him at once from his happiness; took from him the majesty of his nature; left him poor, and impotent and blind, and naked; transmitting to each of his children all the "guilt" of the primeval sin. Adam was the "federal head of the human race." "In Adam's fall we sinned all." Man has now no power of himself to discern good from evil, and follow the good. His best efforts are but "filthy rags" in God's sight; his prayers an "abomination." Man is born "totally depraved." Sin is native in his bones. Hell is his birthright. To be any thing acceptable to God he must renounce his "nature," violate the law of the soul. He is a worm of the dust, and turns this way and that, and up and down, but finds nothing in nature to cling by and climb on.

God is painted in the most awful colors of the Old Testament. The flesh quivers while we read, and the soul recoils upon itself with suppressed breath, and ghastly face, and sickening heart. The very heavens are not clean in his sight. The grim, awful King of

the world, "jealous God visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children;" "angry with the wicked every day," and "keeping anger forever," "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," he hates sin, though he created it, and man, though he made him to fall," "with a perfect hatred." Vengeance is his, and he will repay. He must therefore punish man with all the exquisite torture which infinite thought can devise, and omnipotence apply; a creditor, he exacts the uttermost farthing; a king, upheld by his fury, the smallest offence is high-treason, the greatest of crimes. His code is Draconian; he that offends in one point is guilty of all; good were it for that man he had never been born; extremest vengeance awaits him; the jealous God will come upon him in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder Hence comes the doctrine of "eternal damnation," a dogma which Epicurus and Strato would have called it blasphemy to teach.

But God, though called personal, is yet infinite. Mercy therefore must be part of his nature. He desires to save man from the horrors of hell. Shall he change the nature of things? That is impossible. Shall he forgive all mankind outright? The infinite King forgive high-treason? It is not consistent with divine dignity to forgive the smallest violation of his perfect law. A sin, however small, is "an infinite evil." He must have an infinite "satisfaction." All the human race are sinners, by being born of woman. The damning sin of Adam vests in all their bones. They must suffer eternal damnation to atone for their inherited sin, unless some "substitute" take their place.

Now it has long been a maxim in the courts of

law, — whence many forensic terms have been taken and applied to theology, especially since the time of Anselm — that a man's property may suffer in place of his person, and since his friends may transfer their property to him, they may suffer in his place "vicarious punishment."* Thus before Almighty God, there may be a substitute for the sinner. This doctrine is a theological fiction. It is of the same family with what are called "legal fictions" in the courts, and "practical fictions" in the street: a large and ancient family it must be confessed, that has produced great names. But no man can be a substitute for another, for sin is infinite and he finite. Though all the liquid fires of hell be poured from eternity on the penitent head of the whole race, not a single sin, committed by one man, even in his sleep, could be thereby atoned for. An infinite "ransom" must be paid to save a single soul. God's "mercy" overcomes his "justice," for man deserves nothing but "damnation," he will provide the ransom. So he sent down his Son to fulfill the law — which man could not fulfill, — realize infinite goodness, and thus merit the infinite reward, and then suffer all the tortures of infinite sin, as if he had not fulfilled it, and thus prepare a ransom for all; "purchasing" their "salvation." Thus men are saved from hell, by the "vicarious suffering" of the Son. But this would leave them in a negative state; not bad enough for hell; not good enough for heaven. The "merits" of the Son as well as his sufferings, must be set down to their account, and thus man is elevated to heaven by the "imputed righteousness" of the Son.

* "Qui non habet in crumena, luet in cute," is a maxim; and its converse holds good in theology.

But how can the Son achieve these infinite merits and endure this infinite torment and "redeem" and "save" the race? He must be infinite, and then it follows; for all the actions of the Infinite are also infinite, in this logic. But two Infinites there cannot be. The Son, therefore, is the Father, and the Father the Son. God's justice is appeased by God's mercy. God "sacrifices" God for the sake of men. Thus the infinite "satisfaction" is accomplished; with God, God has paid God the infinite ransom, for the infinite sin; the "sacrifice" has been offered; the "atonement" completed; "we are bought with a price;" "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."*

Now in the very teeth of logic this system under consideration maintains that God did not thus purchase the redemption of all, for such "forgiveness" would ill comport with his dignity. Therefore certain "conditions" are to be complied with, before man is entitled to this salvation. God knew from all eternity who would be saved, and they are said to be "elected from before the foundation of the world," to eternal happiness. God is the cause of their compliance — for men have no freewill, — hence "foreordination;" they are not saved by their own merit, but each by Christ's — hence "particular redemption;" having no will, they mut be "called" and moved by God, and if elected must be sure to come to him — hence "effectual calling;" if to be saved, they must certainly continue in "grace" — hence the "perseverance of the saints." The salvation of the "elect;" the damnation of the non-elect, is all effected by the "decrees of God;" the "agency of the Holy Sirit,"

* See Theism, etc., Sermon III., IV.

the "satisfaction of Christ," all is a work of "divine grace."

The doctrine of the "Trinity" has always been connected with this system. It does not embrace three Gods, as it has been often alleged, but one God in three persons, as the Hindoos have one God in thirty million persons, and the pantheists one God in all persons and all things. The Father sits on the throne of his glory; the Son, at his right hand, "intercedes" for man; the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from the Father and the Son, "calls" the saints and makes them "persevere." This doctrine of the Trinity covers a truth, though it often conceals it. Its religious significance — the same with that of polytheism — seems to be this; God does not limit himself within the unity of his essence, but incarnates himself in man — hence the Son; diffuses himself in space and in spirit, works with men both to will and to do — hence the Holy Ghost.*

1. *Merits of this Party.*

This party has great practical merits. The doctrine sketched above shows the hatefulness of sin, the terrible evils it brings upon the world. Alas, it need not look long to see them. It shows man at first the child of God; holding daily intercourse with the Father; enjoying the raptures of heaven on earth, but by one step, cast out, degraded, lost, undone! It shows the world full of sweet sunshine, truth, beauty, love, till sin entered, and then — "the trail of the serpent is over it all." It tells how sin benumbs the mind, palsies the heart, and shuts out wisdom at every

* See Miscellanies, Art. XII. and Sermon of the Relation of Ecclesiastical Institutions, etc.

entrance, bringing death to the intellect, death to the affections, death to the soul. The great enemy of men is the child of sin. It tells man he is the son of God, fallen from his high estate, and curshed by the fall; but he may yet return. Christ will bind up his wounds; wash away all sin, with his blood, and he may start anew. It encourages men who are steeped in sin; tells them they may yet return. It says, "Come unto Christ." But alas, the wounded man, with no freedom, must wait till the Holy Ghost, like the good Samaritan, bind up his wounds and bid him rise and walk. If he is of the elect, the invitation will come, and each hopes he is of that blessed company.

One excellence comes out of its very defect: it thinks none can be saved but by accepting Christianity, a knowledge of which comes through the letter of the Bible. Therefore it is indefatigable in sending Bibles and missionaries the world over. If they do little good where they go, the very purpose and effort are good. A man is always warmed by the smoke of his own generous sacrifice.

It recommends an austere morality. It calls on men to repent; addresses rousing sermons to the fears of the wicked, and stirs men whom higher motives would not move — men who ask pay for goodness. It has a deep reverence for God; and counts religion a reality; insists on a right heart. It watches over sin with a jealous eye. Coming from a principle so deep as reverence for God; believing it has all of truth in the lids of the Bible; confiding in the intercession and atonement of Christ; setting before the righteous the certainty of God's aid if they are faithful, to assure their perseverance, and promising all the rewards of heaven, it makes men strong, very strong. We see its

influence, good and bad, on some of the fathers of New England, in their self-denial, their penitence, their austere devotion, the unconquerable daring, the religious awe which marked those iron men.

2. *The Vices of this Party.*

If it have great merits, it has great faults, which come from its peculiar doctrine, while its merits have a deeper source. It makes God dark and awful; a judge not a protector; a king not a Father; jealous, selfish, vindictive. He is the Draco of the universe; the author of sin, but its unforgiving avenger. Man must hate the picture it makes of God. He is the Jehovah of the book of Numbers, more cruel than Odin or Baal. He punishes sin — though its author — for his own glory, not for man's benefit and correction. All the lovely traits of divine character it bestows upon the Son; he is mild and beautiful as God is awful and morose. Men rush from the Father; they flee to the Son. Its religion is fear of God, not love of him, for man cannot love what is not lovely.

This system degrades man. It deprives him of freedom. It makes him not only the dwarf of himself — for the actual man is but the dwarf of the ideal and possible man — but a being hapless and ill-born; the veriest worm that crawls the globe. To take a step toward heaven he must deny his nature, and crucify himself. He is born totally depraved, and laden besides, with the sins of Adam. He can do nothing to recover from these sins; the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification; this righteousness is received through "faith," which is the "gift of God," and so "salvation is wholly of grace." The salvation of man is wrought

for him, not by him. It logically annihilates the difference between good and evil, denying the ultimate value of a manly life. It takes out of the pale of humanity its fairest sons, prophets, saints, apostles, Moses, Jesus, Paul, and makes their character miraculous, not manly. It tears off the crown of royalty from man, makes Jesus a God; does not tell us we are born sons of God, as much as Jesus, and may stand as close to God. It does not tell of God now, near at hand, but a long while ago. It makes the Bible a tyrant of the soul. It is our master in all departments of thought. Science must lay his kingly head in the dust; reason veil her majestic countenance; conscience bow him to the earth; affection keep silence when the priest uplifts the Bible. Man is subordinate to the apocryphal, ambiguous, imperfect, and often erroneous Scripture of the Word; the Word itself, as it comes straightway from the fountain of truth, through reason, conscience, affection, and the soul, he must not have. It takes the Bible for God's statute-book; combines old Hebrew notions into a code of ethics; takes figures for fact; settles questions in morals and religion by texts of scripture! It can justify any thing out of the Bible. It wars to the knife against gaiety of heart; condemns amusement as sinful; sneers at common sense; spits upon reason, calling it "carnal;" appeals to low and selfish aims — to fear, the most selfish and base of all passions. Fear of hell is the bloody knout with which it scourges reluctant flesh across the finite world, and whips him smarting into heaven at last. It does not know that goodness is its own recompense, and vice its own torture; that judgment takes place daily, and God's laws execute themselves. Shall I be bribed to good-

ness by hope of heaven; or driven by fear of hell? It makes men do nothing from the love of what is good, beautiful, and true. It asks, shall a man love goodness as a picture, for itself? Its divine life is but a good bargain. It makes a day of judgment; heaven and hell to begin after death, while goodness is heaven, and vice hell, now and forever.

It makes religion unnatural to men, and of course hostile; Christianity alien to the soul. It paves hell with children's bones; has a personal devil in the world, to harry the land, and lure or compel men to eternal woe. Its God is diabolical. It puts an intercessor between God and man; relies on the advocate. Cannot the Infinite love his frail children without teasing? Needs He a chancellor, to advise Him to use forgiveness and mercy? Can men approach the Every-where-present only by attorney, as a beggar comes to a Turkish king? Away with such folly. Jesus of Nazareth bears his own sins, not another's. How can his righteousness be "imputed" to me! Goodness out of me is not mine; helps me on more than another's food feeds or his sleep refreshes me. Adam's sin,— it was Adam's affair, not mine.

This system applies to God the language of kings' courts, trial, sentence, judgment, pardon, satisfaction, allegiance, day of judgment. Like a courtier it lays stress on forms — baptism, which in itself is nothing but a dispensation of water, the Lord's supper, which of itself is nothing but a dispensation of wine and bread. It dwells in professions of faith; watches for God's honor. It makes men stiff, unbending, cold, formal, austere, seldom lovely. They have the strength of the law, not the beauty of the gospel; the cunning of the Pharisee; not the simplicity of the

Christian. You know its followers soon as you see them; the rose is faded out of their cheeks; their mouths drooping and sad; their appearance says, alas, my fellow worm! there is no more sunshine, for the world is dammed! It is a faith of stern, morose men, well befitting the descendants of Odin, and his iron peers; its religion is a principle, not a sentiment; a foreign matter imported into the soul, by forethought and resolution; not a native fountain of joy and gladness, leaping up in winter's frost, and summer's gladness, playing in the sober autumn, or the sunshine of spring. Its Christianity is frozen mercury in the bosom of the warm-hearted Christian, who, by nature, would go straight to God, pray as spontaneous as the blackbird sings, love a thousand times where he hated not once, and count a divine life the greatest good in this world, and ask nothing more in the next. The heaven of this system is a grand pay-day, where humility is to have its coach and six, forsooth, because she has been humble; the saints and martyrs, who bore trials in the world, are to take their vengeance by shouting "Hallelujah, Glory to God," when they see the anguish of their old persecutors, and the "smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever." Do the joys of Paradise pall on the pleasure-jaded sense of the "elect?" They look off in the distance to the tortures of the damned, where destruction is naked before them, and hell hath no covering; where the devil with his angels stirreth up the embers of the fire which is never quenched; where the doubters, whom the church could neither answer nor put to silence; where the great men of antiquity, Confucius, Buddha, Hermes, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; where the men, great, and gifted, and

glorious, who mocked at difficulty, softened the mountains of despair, and hewed a path amid the trackless waste, that mortal feet might tread the way of peace; where the great men of modern times, who would not insult the deity by bowing to the foolish word of a hireling priest — where all these writhe in their tortures, turn and turn and find no ray, but yell in fathomless despair; and when the elect behold all this, they say, striking on their harps of gold, "Aha! We are comforted and thou are tormented, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and our garments are washed white in the blood of the Lamb."

This system exists nowhere in its perfection; that is, only ideal. It is incarnated imperfectly in many forms. But it is the groundwork of the popular theology of New England.* It appears variously modified in all the chief denominations of North America and Great Britain. No one of all the sects which represents it, but has great excellences in spite of this hateful system. Each of them is doing a good but imperfect work. A rude nation must have a rude doctrine. Yet such is the system on which they rest their theology. Though their religion, say what they will, comes from no such quarter. This system is older than Prostestantism, and is the child of many fathers. However it is continually approaching its end. The battering-ram which levelled the philosophy of the Stagirite and the schoolmen, will beat, erelong, on the theology of the Church, and how shall it stand? It is based on a lie, and that lie undermined. A man

* I have been careful not to cite authorities lest *individual churches* or *writers* should be deemed responsible for the sin of the mass. But *I have not spoken without book.*

who loves wife and child, and would die any death to save a friend, will be slow to believe in total depravity; he that sees a swarm of bees in summer, or hears the blackbird sing in his honeysuckle, will not believe God is a devil, though all the divines in the Church quote the fathers and scriptures to prove it. God speaks truth always; will the pulpit prevail against Him? The sands of this theology are numbered, and its glass shaken.

II. *The Party that sets out from the Paternity of God.*

This system makes God not a king but a father and mother, infinite in power, wisdom, and love. His love rays out in every direction, seeking to bless the all of things. The world, its overarching heavens, its ocean, its mountains, its flowers that brighten in the sunbeam; the crimson and purple that weave a lustrous veil for the face of day, at the rising and decline of light; the living things of earth, beast, bird, fish, insect, so full of happiness that the world hums with its joy,— all these it counts but a whisper of God's goodness, though all which these babbling elements can teach. It sees the same in the Bible, for it will see itself, and walks in the shade of its own halo of glory, and so treads on rainbows where it steps.

This doctrine of God's goodness is a mighty truth, poorly apprehended as yet, though destined to a great work, and development which shall never end. Men can only see in God what is in themselves. Their conception of God cannot transcend their own ideal stature of spirit. Since goodness is not active in most men, nor love predominant, they see God as power to be feared; at best as wisdom to be reverenced; not as

goodness to be loved; nor can they till themselves become lovely.

1. *The Merits of this Party.*

The merits of this system are very great. It makes goodness the cause of all. God made the world to bless it. His love flowed forth a celestial stream that sparkles in the sky, surrounding the world. Apparent evils are but good in disguise, save only sin, and this man brings on himself, through the imperfection of his nature, progressive and free. Goodness is infinite, but sin and evil finite. It sees a perfect system of optimism everywhere. The infinite love must desire the best thing; the infinite wisdom devise means for that end, and the infinite power bring about the result. All things are overruled for good at the last. Sin is a point which mistaken men pass through in their development. Suffering is man's instructor. It was good for Isaiah and Stephen and Paul to bear the burdens they bore; affliction is success in a mask. It makes the world look fair and the face joyful. It hears the word of love even in the voice of the earthquake, and the tread of the pestilence. Evil is not ultimate but transient. It tells man of his noble nature; his lofty duty; his fair destination if faithful. It makes religion natural to man; bids him obey its law and be blessed; not to be good or do good for fear of hell or hope of heaven, but for itself. It would not have men fear God,— the religion of the Old Testament; but love him — the religion of the New Testament. It tells us we are made for progressive goodness here, and heaven hereafter. It denies original sin, or admitting that, makes it of no effect, for Christ has restored all to their first estate; thus

avoiding the logical absurdity of the last form. Its hell is not eternal, for the infinite love of God must make the whole of existence a blessing to each man. God is so lovely that we flee, as children, to his arms, a refuge from all the troubles, follies, and sins of life. It shows this uncontainable goodness in earth and sea and sky; in the prophets and apostles, sent to bless; in Jesus the noble man who came to help the world — to seek and save the lost. It fills the soul with tranquility, peace, and exceeding trust in God. Serenely the man goes about his duties; is not borne down with his cross, though never so weighty; looks on and smiles, fearing no evil but error and lack of faith. As he looks back, he sees an end of his perfection, but does not despair at the broadness of the divine law, though his steps totter in this infancy of his being, for he sees worlds open before him, where a stronger sunlight and a purer sky await him; where reason, conscience, the affections, and the soul shall finish their perfect work, and he shall not be weary with his walk, not faint though he runs.

This system allows no ultimate evil, as a background of God; believes in no vindictive punishment. The woes of sin are but its antidote. Suffering comes from wrong-doing, as well-being from virtue. If there be suffering in the next world, it is, as in this, but the medicine of the sickly soul. It allows no contradiction between God's justice and mercy. We require to be reconciled with Him, not He with us. We love Him soon as seen. It makes religion inward; of the life and heart; the son's service, not the slave's; a sentiment, as well as principle; an encouragement no less than a restraint. God seeks to pour himself into the heart, as

the sun into the roses of June. These are no vulgar merits.*

2. *The Defects and Vices of this Party.*

So far as this system is derived from its fundamental idea, it has no defect nor vice, for the idea is absolute and answers to the fact that God is good. But the absurdities of other forms mingle their pestilent breath with the fragrance of truth; and the party that poorly espouses this divine idea has its defects. Men do not see the sinfulness of sin; underrate the strength of human passion, cupidity, wrath, selfishness, intrenched in the institutions of the world, and belonging to the present low stage of civilization. They reflect too little on the evil that comes from violating the law of God; overlook the horrors of outraged conscience, and do not remember that suffering must last as long as error, and man only can remove that from himself. They are not sufficiently zealous to do good to others, in a spiritual way.

This party has also its redundancies. It has taken much from the ungrateful doctrines of the darker system. Its followers rely on authority, as all Prostestants have done. They make a man depend on Christ, who died centuries ago — not on himself, who lives now; forgetting that it is not the death of Jesus that helps us, but the death of sin in our heart; not the life of Jesus, the personal Christ, however divine, but the life of goodness, holiness, love, in our own heart. A Christ outside the man is nothing; his divine life nothing. God is not a magician to blot sin out of the soul, and make men the same as if they had never sinned.

* Theism, etc., Sermons V.–X.

Each man must be his own Christ, or he is no Christian.

No sect has fully developed the doctrine that is legitimately derived from this absolute ideal. When its time comes it will annihilate this poor theology of our time, and give man his birthright. Some have attempted the work in all ages, and shared the fate of men before their time. Their bones lie mouldering in many a spot, accursed of men. They bore a prophet's mission, and met his fate. Their seed has not perished out of the earth.

This doctrine in some measure tinges the faith of all sects with its rosy light. It abates the austerity of the Calvinist, the exclusiveness of the Baptist; does a great work in the camp of the Methodist. All churches have some of it, from the Episcopalian to the Mormonite, though in spite of their theology. There is something so divine in religion, that it softens the ruggedest natures, and lets light even into theology. The sects, however, which chiefly rely upon it, are the Universalists, the Restorationists, and Unitarians. But how poorly they do their work; with what curtains of darkness do they overcloud the holy of holies! What poor ineptitudes do they offer us in the midst of the sublimest doctrines; how does the timid littleness of their achievement, or endeavor, stand rebuked before absolute religion; before the motto on the banner of Christianity: God is Love! What despair of man, of reason, of goodness; what bowing and cringing to tradition! Are not men born in our time as of old, or has a race of Liliputs and Manikins succeeded to Moses, Socrates, Jesus, and Paul? But this must pass. The two former have at their basis the old super-

natural theology, and differ from the strictest sect mainly in their exegesis; they would believe any thing which the Bible taught. They are, however, doing a great work. But the latter are of more importance in this respect, and, though few in numbers, deserve a notice by themselves.

Of the Unitarians, and their present Position.

At first the "Unitarian heresy," as it was presumptuously called, was a protest against the unreasonable and unscriptural doctrines of the Church; a protest on the part of reason and conscience; an attempt to apply good sense to theology, to reconcile knowledge with belief, reason with revelation, to humanize the Church. Its theology was of the supernatural character mingled with more or less of naturalism and spiritualism. It held to the first positive principles of the Reformation — the Bible and private judgment. Contending, as it must, with the predominant sects, then even more arrogant and imperious than now — perhaps not knowing so well the ground they stood on — its work, like most reformations, was at first critical and negative. It was a "Statement of Reasons for not believing" certain doctrines, very justly deemed not scriptural. Thus it protested against the Trinity, total depravity, vindictive and eternal punishment, the common doctrines of the satisfaction of Christ, the malevolent character ascribed to God by the popular theology. It recommended a deep, true morality lived for its own sake; perhaps sometimes confounded morality with piety. To make sure of heaven, it demanded a manly life, laying more stress on the character than the creed; more on honesty, diligence, charity, than on grace before meat, or morning and evening pray-

ers. In point of moral and religious life, as set forth in the two Great Commands, its advocates fear no comparison with any sect. It was not boastful, but modest, cautious, unassuming; mindful of its own affairs; not giving a blow for a blow, nor returning abuse — of which there was no lack — with similiar abuse. It had a great work to do, and did it nobly. The spirit of reformers was in its leading men. The sword of polemic theology rarely fell into more just and merciful hands. But the time has not come to celebrate with due honor the noble heart, the manly forbearance, the Christian heroism of those who have gone where the weary are at rest, or who yet linger here. They fought the battle like Christian scholars, long and well. The sevenfold shield of orthodoxy was clove asunder, spite of its gorgon head. Its terrible spear, with its "five points," was somewhat blunted.

Thus far Unitarianism was but carrying out the principles of the Protestant Reformation, to get at the pure doctrines of Scripture, which was still the standard of faith. Some, it seems, silently abandoned the divine and infallible character of the Old Testament — as Socinus had done — but clung strongly as ever to that of the New Testament, while they admitted the greatest latitude in the criticism and exegesis of that collection. The Unitarians were at first the most reasonable of sectarians. The Bible was their creed. Thinking men, who would conclude for themselves, say the Church what it might say, naturally came up to Unitarianism. Hence its growth in the most highly cultivated portion of the New World, and the most moral, it has been said. Men sick of the formality, the doctrines, the despotism of other sects; disgusted with the sophistry whose burrow was in the Church;

pained at the charlatanry which anointed dulness sometimes showed, as the clerical mantle blew aside, by chance — these also came up to the Unitarians. Besides these, perhaps men of no spiritual faith, who hated to hear hell mentioned, or to have piety demanded, came also, hoping to have less required of them. Pious men, hungering and thirsting after truth — men born religious, found here their home, where the mind and the soul were both promised their rights. This explains the growth of the sect. The Unitarians, seeing the violence, the false zeal, of other sects, the compassing of sea and land to make a proselyte, went, it may be thought, to the opposite extreme, in some cases. They were called "cold," and were never accused of carrying matters too fast and too far, and pushing religion to extremes. They were never good fighters, unless when occasion compelled. They stood on the defensive, and never crossed their neighbor's borders except to defend their own. They thought it better to live down an opponent, than to talk him down, or even hew him down,— the old theological way of silencing an adversary whom it was difficult to answer.

Still, however, it seems there always were in their ranks men who thought freedom was too free; that "there must be limits to free inquiry," even within the canon; and Unitarians must have a "creed." * Others began to look into the mythology of the Old Testament, and to talk very freely about the imperfections in the New Testament. Some even doubted if the whale swallowed Jonah. "Bibical criticism" opened men's eyes, and "terrible questions" were asked; great problems were coming up which Luther never antici-

* It has since been made, and such a creed! [i. e. in 1841.]

pated, for mankind has not stood still for three centuries, but has studied science and history, and learned some things never known before.

At length the negative work was well over, and the hostile forces of other sects were withdrawn, or the war changed into an armed neutrality, at most "a war of posts." The "Christian name," however, is not yet allowed the Unitarians by their foes, and a hearty malediction, a sly curse, or a jealous caution, shows even at this day the spirit that yet keeps its "theological odium," venomous as before. It is no strange thing for Unitarians to be pronounced infidels, and remanded to hell by their fellow Christians! Now the time has come for Unitarianism — representing the movement party in theological affairs,— to do something; develop the truth it has borne, latent and unconscious, in its bosom. It is plain what the occasion demands. Good sense must be applied to theology; religion applied to life, both to be done radically, fearlessly, with honest earnestness; assumptions must be adandoned; the facts sought for; their relation and their law determined, and thus truth got at. Did the early reformers see all things; are we to stop where they stopped, and because they stopped? All false assumptions must be laid aside. The very foundation of Protestantism — the infallibility of Scripture — is that a fact, or a no-fact? But this is just the thing that is not done; which Unitarianism is not doing. The Trojan horse of sectarian organization is brought into the citadel with the usual effect upon that citadel. The "Unitarian sect" is divided. There is an "Old School," and a "New School," as it is called, and a chasm between them, not wide, as yet, but very deep. The "Old School" holds in part, to

the first principles of the Reformation; sees no further; differs theoretically from the "Orthodox" party, in exegesis, and that alone; like that is ready to believe any thing which has a Thus-saith-the-Lord before it, at least if we may judge from the issue so often made; its Christianity rests on the authority of Jesus; that on the authority of his miracles; and his miracles on the testimony of the Evangelists. Therefore it is just as certain there is a God, or an immortal soul, and religious duties, as it is certain that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, or that John wrote the fourth Gospel and never made a mistake in it! It has somebody's word for it. But whose? Its religious doctrine is legitimated only by the sensations of the apostles. This party says, as the Unitarian fathers never said: There must be limits to free inquiry; we must not look into the grounds of religious belief, lest they be found no grounds; "where ignorance is bliss 't is folly to be wise!" The old landmarks must not be passed by, nor the Bible questioned as to its right to be master over the soul. Christianity must be rested on the authority of Christ, and that on the miracles, and the words of the New Testament. We must not inquire into their authority. If there is a contradiction between the Word of the New Testament and reason, why the "Word," must be believed in spite of reason, for we can be much more certain of what we read than of what we know!

Thus the old school assumes a position abhorred by primitive Unitarianism, which declared that free inquiry should never stop but with a conviction of truth. Unitarianism, as represented by the majority of its adherents, refuses to fall back on absolute religion and morality, with no reliance on form, tradition,

scripture, personal authority. It creeps behind texts, usage, and does not look facts in the face. The cause, in part, is plain as noonday. It is connected with a poor and sensual philosophy, the same in its basis with that which gave birth to the selfish system of Paley, the skepticism of Hume, the materialism of Hobbes, the denial of the French Deists; the same philosophy which drives the other sects in despair to their supernatural theory. This cuts men off from direct communion with God, and curtails all their efforts. Unitarianism, therefore, is in danger of becoming a truncated supernaturalism, its apex shorn off; all of supernaturalism but the supernatural. With a philosophy too rational to go the full length of the supernatural theory; too sensual to embrace the spiritual method and ask no person to mediate between man and God, it oscillates between the two; humanizes the Bible, yet calls it miraculous; believes in man's greatness, freedom, and spiritual nature, yet asks for a mediator and redeemer, and says, "Christ established a new relation between man and God;" it admits man can pray for himself, and God hear for himself, and yet prays "in the name of Christ," and trusts an "intercessor." It censures the traditionary sects, yet sits itself among the tombs, and mourns over things past and gone; believes the humanity of Jesus, that he was a model-man for us all, yet his miraculous birth likewise and miraculous powers, and makes him an anomalous and impossible being. It blinds men's eyes with the letter, yet bids them look for the spirit; stops their ears with texts of the Old Testament, and then asks them to listen to the voice of God in their heart; it reverences Jesus manfully, yet denounces all such as preach absolute religion and morality, as he did, on

its own authority, with nothing between them and God, neither tradition nor person. Well might a weeping Jeremiah say of it, "Alas for thee, now hast thou forsaken the promise of thy youth, the joy of thine espousals!" or with the son of Sirach, "How wise wast thou in thy youth, and as a flood filled with understanding. Thy soul covered the whole earth; thy name went far unto the islands, and for thy peace thou wast beloved; the countries marvelled at thee for thy songs and proverbs, and parables, and interpretations; but by thy body wast thou brought into subjection; thou didst stain thine honor, so that thou broughtest wrath upon thy children, and wast grieved for thy folly!" It has not kept its faith. It clings to the skirts of tradition, which, "as a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers — keepeth nothing." It would believe nothing not reasonable, and yet all things scriptural; so it will not look facts in the fact, and say, This is in the Bible, yes, in the New Testament, but out of reason none the less. So with perfect good faith, it "explains away" what is offensive: "This is not in the canon. That is a false interpretation." To such a proficiency has this art of explaining away been carried that the scripture is a piece of wax in the Unitarian hand, and takes any shape: the devil is an oriental figure of speech; Paul believed in him no more than Peter Bayle; the miraculous birth of Jesus, the ascension in the body, the stories of Abraham, Jonah, Daniel, are "true as symbols not as facts;" Moses and Isaiah never speak of Jesus in the Law and the Prophets, yet Jesus is right when he says they did; David in the Psalm is a sick man, speaking only of himself, but when Simon Peter quotes that Psalm, the

inspired king is predicting Jesus of Nazareth!* These things are notorious facts. If the Athanasian creed, the thirty-nine articles of the English church, and the Pope's bull "Unigenitus," could be found in a Greek manuscript, and proved the work of an "inspired" apostle, no doubt Unitarianism would in good faith explain all three, and deny they taught the doctrine of the trinity or the fall of man. The Unitarian doctrine of inspiration — can any one tell what it is?

But let the sect be weighed in an even balance, its theological defects be set off against the vast service it has done, and is still doing for morals and religion. But this is not the place for its praise. Of the "new school" of Unitarians, if such it may be called, embracing as it does men of the greatest possible diversity of religious sentiment and opinion — it is not decorous to speak here.

Now Unitarianism must do one of two things, affirm the great doctrines of absolute religion — teaching that man is greater than the Bible, ministry, or church, that God is still immanent in mankind, that man saves himself by his own and not another's character, that a perfect manly life is the true service, and the only service God requires, the only source of well-being now or ever — it must do this, or cease to represent the progress of man in theology, and then some other will take

* Dr. Palfrey's work on the Old Testament by one of its most distinguished scholars, finds small favor with this party, though excepting the valuable works of Dr. Geddes above referred to, it is the only attempt ever made in the English tongue to look the facts of the Old Testament manfully in the face!

its office; stand God-parent to the fair child it has brought into the world, but dares not own.*

To sum up what has been said:— we see that the Catholic and the Prostestant party both start with a false assumption, the divinity of the churches, or that of the Bible; both claim mastery over the soul; but both fail to give or allow the absolute religion. Both set bounds to man, which must be reached if they are not already. Both represent great truths, out of which their excellence and power proceed, but both great falsehoods, which impoverish their excellence. Each is too narrow for the soul; should the persons who sit in these churches rise to the stature of men, they must carry away roof and steeple, for man is greater than the churches he allows to tyrannize over him.

* The above was written in 1841, since then the American Unitarians, as a body, have retreated still further back, siding with Mediæval theology and American slavery.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE PARTY THAT ARE NEITHER CATHOLICS NOR PROTESTANTS

This party has an idea wider and deeper than that of the Catholic or Protestant, namely; that God still inspires men as much as ever; that he is immanent in spirit as in space. For the present purpose, and to avoid circumlocution, this doctrine may be called SPIRITUALISM. This relies on no church, tradition, or scripture, as the last ground and infallible rule; it counts these things teachers, if they teach, not masters; helps, if they help us, not authorities. It relies on the divine presence in the nature of man; the eternal word of God, which is TRUTH, as it speaks through the faculties he has given. It believes God is near the soul, as matter to the sense; thinks the canon of revelation not yet closed, nor God exhausted. It sees him in nature's perfect work; hears him in all true scripture, Jewish or Phœnician; feels him in the aspiration of the heart; stoops at the same fountain with Moses and Jesus, and is filled with living water. It calls God father and mother, not King; Jesus brother, not redeemer; Heaven home; religion nature. It loves and trusts, but does not fear. It sees in Jesus, a man living manlike, highly gifted, though not without errors, and living with earnest and beautiful fidelity to God, stepping thousands of years before the race of men; the profoundest religious genius God has raised up, whose words and works help us to form and develop the idea of a complete religious man. But he lived

for himself; died for himself; worked out his own salvation, and we must do the same, for one man cannot live for another more than he can eat or sleep for him. It is no personal Christ but the spirit of wisdom, holiness, love, that creates the well-being of men; a life at one with God. The divine incarnation is in all mankind.

The aim it proposes is a complete union of man with God, till every action, thought, wish, feeling is in perfect harmony with the divine will. The "Christianity" it rests in, is not the point man goes through in his progress, as the rationalist, not the point God goes through in his development, as the supernaturalist maintains; but absolute religion, the point where man's will and God's will are one and the same. Its source is absolute, its aim absolute, its method absolute. It lays down no creed; asks no symbol; reverences exclusively no time nor place, and therefore can use all time and every place. It reckons forms useful to such as they help; one man may commune with God through the bread and the wine, emblems of the body that was broke, and the blood that was shed, in the cause of truth; another may hold communion through the moss and the violet, the mountain, the ocean, or the scripture of suns, which God has writ in the sky; it does not make the means the end; it prizes the signification more than the sign. It knows nothing of that puerile distinction between reason and revelation; never finds the alleged contradiction between good sense and religion. Its temple is all space; its shrine the good heart; its creed all truth; its ritual works of love and utility; its profession of faith a manly life, works without, faith within, love of God and man. It bids man do duty, and take what comes of it, grief or gladness. In

every desert it opens fountains of living water; gives balm for every wound, a pillow in all tempests; tranquility in each distress. It does good for goodness' sake; asks no pardon for its sins, but gladly serves out the time. It is meek and reverent of truth, but scorns all falsehood, though upheld by the ancient and honorable of the earth. It bows to no idols, of wood, or flesh, of gold or parchment, or spoken wind; neither mammon, neither the church, nor the Bible, nor yet Jesus, but God only. It takes all helps it can get; counts no good word profane though a heathen spoke it; no lie sacred, though the greatest prophet had said the word. Its redeemer is within; its salvation within; its heaven and its oracle of God. It falls back on perfect religion; asks no more; is satisfied with no less. The personal Jesus is its encouragement, for he helps reveal the possible of man. Its watchword is, BE PERFECT AS GOD. With its eye on the Infinite, it goes through the striving and the sleep of life; equal to duty, not above it; fearing not whether the ephemeral wind blow east or west. It has the strength of the hero; the tranquil sweetness of the saint. It makes each man his own priest; but accepts gladly him that speaks a holy word. Its prayer in words, in works, in feeling, in thought, is this, Thy will be done; its church that of all holy souls, the church of the first-born, called by whatever name.*

Let others judge the merits and defects of this scheme. It has never organized a church; yet in all ages, from the earliest, men have, more or less freely, set forth its doctrines. We find these men among the

* It is unnecessary to enlarge on this scheme, since so much has been said of it already. See Book I., ch. VII. § 3, and Book II. ch. VIII. and Book III. ch. V. VI.

dispised and forsaken. The world was not ready to receive them. They have been stoned and spit upon in all the streets of the world. The "pious" have burned them as haters of God and man; the "wicked" called them bad names and let them go. They have served to flesh the swords of the Catholic Party, and feed the fires of the Protestant. But flame and steel will not consume them. The seed they have sown is quick in many a heart; their memory blessed by such as live divine. These were the men at whom the world opens wide the mouth and draws out the tongue and utters its impotent laugh; but they received the fire of God on their altar, and kept living its sacred flame. They go on the forlorn hope of the race; but truth puts a wall of fire about them and holds the shield over their head in the day of trouble. The battle of truth seems often lost, but is always won. Her enemies but erect the bloody scaffolding where the workmen of God go up and down, and with divine hands build wiser than they know. When the scaffolding falls the temple will appear.

CHAPTER VII

THE FINAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

Now then, if it be asked, what relation the church sustains to the religious element, the answer is plain: The soul is greater than the church. Religion, as reason, is of God; the absolute religion, and therefore eternal, based on God alone; the Christian churches, Catholic and Protestant, are of men, and therefore transient. Let them say their say; man is God's child, and free of their tyranny; he must not accept their limitations, nor bow to their authority, but go on his glorious way. The churches are a human affair quite as much as the state; ecclesiastical, like political institutions, are changeable, human, subject to the caprices of public opinion. The divine right of kings to bear sway over the body, and the divine right of the churches to rule over the soul, both rest on the same foundation — on a LIE.

The Christian church, like fetichism and polytheism, like the state, has been projected out of man in his development and passage through the ages; its several phases correspond to man's development and civilization, and are inseparable from it. They are the index of the condition of man. They bear their justification in themselves. They could not have been but as they were. To censure or approve Catholicism, or Protestantism, is to censure or approve the state of the race which gave rise to these forms; to condemn ablute religion, called by whatever name, is to condemn both man and God.

Jesus fell back on God, aiming to teach absolute religion, absolute morality; the truth its own authority, his works his witness. The early Christians fell back on the authority of Jesus; their successors, on the Bible, the work of the apostles and prophets; the next generation on the church; the work of apostles and fathers. The world retreads this ground. Protestantism delivers us from the tyranny of the church, and carries us back to the Bible. Biblical criticism frees us from the thraldom of the scripture, and brings us to the authority of Jesus. Philosophical Spiritualism liberates us from all personal and finite authority, and restores us to God, the primeval fountain, whence the church, the scriptures, and Jesus have drawn all the water of life, wherewith they filled their urns. Thence, and thence only, shall mankind obtain absolute religion and spiritual well-being. Is this a retreat for mankind? No, it is progress without end. The race of men never before stood so high as now; with suffering, tears, and blood they have toiled, through barbarism and war, to their present height, and we see the world of promise opening upon our eye. But what is not behind is before us.

Institutions arise as they are needed, and fall when their work is done. Of these things nothing is fixed. Institutions are provisional, man only is final. Corporeal despotism is getting ended; will the spiritual tyranny last for ever? A will above our puny strength, marshals the race of men, using our freedom, virtue, folly, as instruments to one vast end — the harmonious development of man. We see the art of God in the web of a spider, and the cell of a bee, but have not skill to discern it in the march of man. We repine at the slowness of the future in coming, or the swiftness

of the past in fleeing away; we sigh for the fabled "Millennium" to advance, or pray time to restore us the age of gold. It avails nothing. We cannot hurry God, nor retard him. Old schools and new schools seem as men that stand on the shore of some Atlantic bay, and shout, to frighten back the tide, or urge it on. What boots their cry? Gently the sea swells under the moon, and, in the hour of God's appointment, the tranquil tide rolls in, to inlet and river, to lave the rocks, to bear on its bosom the ship of the merchant, the weeds of the sea. We complain, as our fathers; let us rather rejoice, for questions less weighty than these have in other ages been disposed of only with the point of the sword, and the thunder of cannon — put off, not settled.

If the opinions advanced in this discourse be correct, then religion is above all institutions, and can never fail; they shall perish, but religion endure; they shall wax old as a garment; they shall be changed, and the places that knew them shall know them no more forever; but religion is ever the same, and its years shall have no end.

THE CONCLUSION

"Changes are coming fast upon the world. In the violent struggle of opposite interests, the decaying prejudices that have bound men together, in the old forms of society, are snapping asunder, one after another. Must we look forward to a hopeless succession of evils, in which exasperated parties will be alternately victors and victims, till all sink under some one power, whose interest it is to preserve a quiet despotism? Who can hope for a better result, unless the great lesson be learnt, that there can be no essential improvement in the condition of society, without the improvement of men as moral and religious beings; and that this can be effected only by religious Truth? To expect this improvement from any form of false religion, because it is called religion, is as if, in administering to one in a fever, we were to take some drug from an apothecary's shelves, satisfied with its being called medicine."—Andrews Norton.—*Statement of Reasons, etc.* Preface, p. xxii.–xxxiii.

"What greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship? Then all things go to decay. Genius leaves the temple to haunt the senate, or the market. Literature becomes frivolous. Science is cold. The eye of youth is not lighted by the hope of other worlds, and age is without honor. In the soul let the redemption be sought. In one soul, in your soul, there are resources for the world. The stationariness of religion, the assumption that the age of inspiration is passed, that the Bible is closed; the fear of degrading the character of Jesus, by representing him as a man, indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. It is the office of a true teacher, to show us that God is, not was; that he speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity — a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man — is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man, or person old and departed."— Ralph Waldo Emerson.—*Address in Divinity College, etc.*, p. 24–25.

THE CONCLUSION

I. OF THE POPULAR THEOLOGY

Theology is the science of religion. It treats of man, God, and the relation between man and God, with the duties which grow out of that relation. It is both queen and mother of all science; the loftiest and most ennobling of all the speculative pursuits of man. But the popular theology of this day is no science at all, but a system of incoherent notions, woven together by scholastic logic, and resting on baseless assumptions. The pursuit thereof in the ecclesiastical method does not elevate. There is in it somewhat not holy. It is not studied as science, with no concern except for the truth of the conclusion. We wish to find the result as we conceived it to be; as Bishop Butler has said, "People habituate themselves to let things pass through their minds, rather than to think of them. Thus by use they become satisfied merely with seeing what is said without going any further." Our theology has two great idols, the BIBLE and CHRIST; by worshiping these, and not God, only, we lose much of the truth they both offer us. Our theology relies on assumptions, not ultimate facts; so it comes to no certain conclusions; weaves cobwebs, but no cloth.

The popular theology rests on these main assumptions; the divinity of the churches, and the divinity of the Bible. What is the value of each? It has been found convenient to assume both. Then it has several important aphorisms, which it makes use of as if they were established truths, to be employed as the

maxims of geometry, and no more to be called in question. Amongst these are the following: Man under the light of nature is not capable of discovering the moral and religious truth needed for his moral and religious welfare; there must be a personal and miraculous mediator between each man and God; a life of blameless obedience to the law of man's nature will not render us acceptable to God, and insure our well-being in the next life; we need a superhuman being to bear our sins, through whom alone we are saved; Jesus of Nazareth is that superhuman, and miraculous, and sin-reconciling mediator; the doctrine he taught is revealed religion, which differs essentially from natural religion; an external and contingent miracle is the only proof of an eternal and necessary truth in morals or religion; God formerly transcended the laws of nature and made a miraculous revelation of some truth; he does not now inspire men as formerly. Each of these aphorisms is a gratuitous assumption, which has never been proved, and of course all the theological deductions made from the aphorisms, or resting on these two main assumptions, are without any real foundation. Theologians have assumed their facts, and then reasoned as if the fact were established, but the conclusion was an inference from a baseless assumption. Thus it accounts for nothing. "We only become certain of the immortality of the soul from the fact of Christ's resurrection," says theology. Here are two assumptions: first, the fact of that resurrection, second, that it proves our immortality. If we ask proof of the first point, it is not easy to come by; of the second, it is not shown. The theological method is false; for it does not prove its facts historically, or verify its conclusions philosophically. The Hin-

doo theory says, the earth rests on the back of an elephant, the elephant on a tortoise. But what does the tortoise rest upon? The great turtle of popular theology rests on — an assumption. Who taught us the infallible divinity of the Bible, or the churches? "Why, we always thought so. We inherited the opinion, as land, from our fathers, to have and to hold, for our use and behoof, for ourselves, and our heirs forever. Would you have a better title? We are regularly 'seized' of the doctrine; it came, with the divine right of kings, from our fathers, who by the grace of God, burnt men for doubting the truth of their theology!" This is the defense of the popular theology. We have freedom in civil affairs, can revise our statutes, change the administration, or amend the constitution. Have we freedom in theological affairs, to revise, change, amend a vicious theology? We have always been doing it, but only by halves, not looking at the foundation of the matter. We have applied good-sense to many things, agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and with distinguished success; not yet to theology. We make improvements in science and art every year. Men survey the clouds, note the variations of the magnetic needle, analyze rocks, waters, soils, and do not fear truth shall hurt them though it make Hipparchus and Cardan unreadable. Our method of theology is false no less than its asumptions. What must we expect of the conclusion? What we find.

If a school were founded to teach geology, and the professors of that science were required to subscribe the geological symbol of Aristotle or Paracelsus, and swear solemnly to interpret facts by that obsolete creed, and maintain and inculcate the geological faith as expressed in that creed, in opposition to Wernerians, Buckland-

ians, Lyellians, and all other geological "heresies," ancient or modern; if the professors were required to subscribe this every five years, and no pupil was allowed the name of geologist, or permitted peacefully to examine a rock, unless he professed that creed, what would men say to the matter? No one thinks such a course strange in theology; our fathers did so before us. In plain English, we are afraid of the truth. "God forbid," said a man famous in his day, "that our love of truth should be so cold as to tolerate any erroneous opinion"— but our own. Any change is looked on with suspicion. If the drift-weed of the ocean be hauled upon the land, men fear the ocean will be drank up, or blown dry; if the pine-tree rock, they exclaim, the mountain falling cometh to naught. How superstitiously men look on the miracle-question, as if the world could not stand if the miracles of the New Testament were not real!

The popular theology does not aim to prove absolute religion, but a system of doctrines made chiefly of words. Now the problem of theology is continually changing. In the time of Moses it was this: To separate religion from the fetichism of the Cannanites, and the polytheism of the Egyptians, and connect it with the doctrine of one God. No doubt Jannes and Jambres exclaimed with pious horror, what, give up the garlic and the cats which our fathers prayed to, and swore by! we shall never be guilty of that infidelity. But the priesthood of garlic came to an end, and the world still continued, though the cats were not worshipped. In the time of Jesus, the problem was: to separate religion from the obsolete ritual of Moses. We know the result; the scribes and pharisees were shocked at the thought of abandoning the ritual of

Moses! But the ritual went its way. In the time of Luther a new problem arose; to separate religion from the forms of the Catholic church. The issue is well known. In our times the problem is to separate religion from whatever is finite, church, book, person, and let it rest on its absolute truth.* Numerous questions come up for discussion: Is Christianity absolute religion? What relation does Jesus bear to the human race? What relation does the Bible sustain to it? We have nothing to fear from truth, or for truth, but every thing to hope. It is about theology that men quarrel, not about religion; that is but one.

II. OF THE POPULAR CHRISTIANITY.

Coming away from the theology of our time, and looking at the public virtue, as revealed in our life, political, commerical, and social, and seeing things as they are, we must come to this conclusion; either Christianity — considered as the absolute religion — is false and utterly detestable, or else modern society, in its basis and details, is wrong, very wrong. There is no third conclusion possible. Religion demands a divine life; society one mean and earthly. Religion says — its great practical maxim — we that are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak; society, we that are strong must make the weak bear our burdens, and do this daily. The strong do not always compel the weak as heretofore, with a sword, nor violently bind them mainly in fetters of iron; they compel with an idea, and chain with manacles unseen, but felt. Men most eminent in defense of the popular theology are loudest in support of American slavery. Hell and

* See Miscellanies, Art. XII.

slavery are their favorite dogmas! Who does the world's work; he that receives most largely the world's good? It needs not that truisms be repeated. Now it is a high word of Christianity, he that is greatest shall be your servant. What is the corresponding word of society? Everybody knows it. Do we estimate greatness in this way, by the man's achievements for the public welfare? Oh no, we have no such vulgar standard! Men of "superior talents and cultivation," do we expect them to be great by serving mankind? Nay, by serving themselves!

Religion is love of God and man. Is that the basis of action with us? A young man setting out in life, and choosing his calling, says this to himself: How can I get the most ease and honors out of the world, returning the least of toil and self-denial? That is the philosophy of many a life; the very end of even what is called the "better class" of society. Who says, This will I do; I will be a man, a whole complete man, as God made me; take care of myself, but serve my brother, counting my strength also HIS, not merely his MINE; I will take nothing from the world which is not honestly, truly, manfully earned? Who puts his feet forward in such a life? We call such a man a FOOL. Yes, Jesus of Nazareth is a fool, tried by the penny-wisdom of this generation. We honor him in our Sunday talk; hearing his words, say solemnly as the parasites of Herod: "It is the voice of a God, not of a man!" and smite a man on both cheeks, who does not cry amen. But all the week long, we blaspheme that great soul, who speaks though dead, and call his word, a fool's talk. That is the popular Christianity. We pray as well as the old Pharisee, "Lord we thank thee we are not as other men, as the heathen Socrates, who

knew nothing, as the 'infidel' who cannot believe contradictions and absurdities. We say grace before meat; attend to all the church-ordinances; can repeat the creed, and we believe every word of both thy testaments; Oh Lord, what wouldst thou more? We have fulfilled all righteousness."

Alas for us! We have taken the name of Jesus in our church and psalm-singing. We can say "Lord, Lord, no man ever spake as thou." But our Christianity is talk; it is not in the heart, nor the hand, nor the head, but only in the tongue. Could that great man, whose soul bestrides the world to bless it, come back again, and speak in bold words, to our condition, follies, sins, his denunciation and his blest beautitudes, rooting up with his "Woe-unto-you hypocrites," what was not of God's planting, and calling things by right names — how should we honor him? As Annas and Caiaphas and their fellows honored that "Galilean, and no prophet,"— with spitting and a cross. But it costs little to talk and to pray.

A divine manliness is the despair of our churches. No man is reckoned good who does not believe in sin, and human inability. We seem to have said: —"Alas for us! We defile our weekdays by selfish and unclean living; we dishonor our homes, by low aims and lack of love; by sensuality and sin. We debase the sterling word of God in our soul; we cannot discern between good and evil, nor read nature aright; nor come at first-hand to God; therefore let us set one day apart from our work; let us build us a house which we will enter only on that day trade does not tempt us; let us take the wisest of books, and make it our oracle; let it save us from thought, and be to us as a God; let us take our brother to explain us this book, to stand between

us and God; let him be holy for us, pray for us, represent a divine life. We know these things cannot be, but let us make believe." The work is accomplished, and we have the Sabbath, the church, the Bible, and the ministry; each beautiful in itself, but our ruin, when made the substitutes for holiness of heart and a divine life.

In absolute religion we have what is wide as the east and the west; deep and high as the Nadir and Zenith; certain as truth, and everlasting as God. But in our life we are heathens. He that fears God becomes a prey. To be religious, with us, in speech and action, a man must take his life in his hand, and be a lamb among the wolves. Does our Christianity enter the counting-room; the senate house; the jail? Does it look on ignorance and poverty, seeking to root them out of the land? The religious doctrine of work and wages is a plain thing; he that wins the staple from the material earth; who expends strength, skill, taste, on that staple, making it more valuable; who aids men to be healthier, wiser, better, more holy, he does a service to the race; does the world's work. To get commodities won by others' sweat, by violence and the long arm, is robbery, the ancient Roman way; to get them by cunning and the long head, is trade, the modern Christian way. What say reason and Jesus to that? No doubt the Christianity of the pulpit is a poor thing. Words cannot utter its poverty; it is neither meat nor drink; the text saves the sermon. But the Christianity of daily life, of the street, that is still worse, the whole Bible could not save it. The history of society is summed up in a word: Cain killed Abel; that of real religion also in a word: Christ died for his brother.

From ancient times we have received two priceless treasures: the Sunday, as a day of rest, social meeting, and religious instruction; and the institution of preaching, whereby a living man is to speak on the deepest of subjects. But what have we made of them? Our Sabbath, what a weariness is it; what superstition defiles its sunny hours! And preaching — what has it to do with life? Men graceless and ungifted make it handiwork; a sermon is the Hercules-pillar and *ultima Thule* of dullness. The popular religion is unmanly and sneaking. It dares not look reason in the face, but creeps behind tradition and only quotes. It has nothing new and living to say. To hear its talk one would think God was dead, or at best asleep. We have enough of church-going, a remnant of our fathers' veneration, which might lead to great good; reverence still for the Sabbath, one of the best institutions the stream of time has brought us; we have still admiration for the name of Jesus. A soul so great and pure could not have lived in vain. But to call ourselves Christians after his kind of religion, while we are keeping slaves and stoning prophets — may God forgive that mockery! Are men to serve God by lengthening the creed and shortening the commandments; making long prayers and devouring the weak; by turning reason out of doors and condemning such as will not believe our theology, nor accept a priest's falsehood in God's name?

Religion is life. Is our life religion? No man pretends it. No doubt there are good men in all churches, and out of all churches; there have been such in the hold of pirate-ships and robbers' dens. I know there are good men and pious women, and I would go leagues long to sit down at their blessed feet and kiss

their garments' hem; but what are the mass of us? Disciples of absolute religion? Christians after the fashion of Jesus of Nazareth? No! only Christians in tongue. It is an imputed righteousness that we honor; not ours, but borrowed of tradition; an "historical Christianity" that was, but is no more. A man is a Christian if he goes to meeting in a fashionable place; pays his pew-tax; bows to the parson; believes with his sect; is good as other people. That is our religion; what is lived, what is preached; "like people, like priest," was never more true.

It is not that we need new forms and symbols, or even the rejection of the old. Baptism and the supper are still beautiful and comforting to many a soul. A spiritual man can put spirit upon these. To many they are still powerful auxiliaries. They commune with God now and then — through bread and wine, as others hold converse with Him forever, through the symbols of nature, the winds that wake the "soft and soul-like sound" of the pine tree; through the earliest violets of spring and the last leaf of autumn; through calm and storm, and stars and blooming trees and winter's snows and summer's sunshine. A religious man never lacks symbols of its own, elements of communion with God. What we want is the SOUL of religion, religion that thinks and works; its SIGN will take care of itself.

With us religion is a nun; she sits, of week days, behind her black veil, in the meeting-house; her hands on her knees; making her creed more unreadable; damning "infidels" and "carnal reason;" she only comes out in the streets of a Sunday, when the shops are shut, and temptation out of sight and the din of business is still as a baby's sleep. All the week, no-

body thinks of that joyless vestal. Meantime strong-handed cupidity, with its legion of devils, goes up and down the earth, and presses weakness, ignorance, and want into his service; sends Bibles to Africa on the deck of his ship, and rum and gunpowder in the hold, knowing that the church he pays will pray for "the outward bound." He brings home, most Christian cupidity, images of himself God has carved in ebony; to enslave and so Christianize and bless the sable son of Ethiopia! Verily we are a Christian people; zealous of good-works; drawing nigh unto God — with our lips! Lives there a savage tribe our sons have visited, that has not cause to curse and hate the name of Christians, who have plundered, polluted, slain, enslaved their children? Not one the wide world round, from the Mandans to the Malays. If there were but half the religion in all Christendom, that there is talk of it during a "revival," in a village; at the baseness, political, commercial, social baseness daily done in the world, such a shout of indignation would go up from the four corners of earth, as should make the ears of cupidity tingle again, and would hustle the oppressor out of creation.

The poor, the ignorant, the weak, have we always with us; inasmuch as we do good unto them, we serve God; inasmuch as we do it not unto the least of them, we blaspheme God and cumber the ground we tread on. Was there no meaning in that word, "He that knew his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes?" They are already laid upon us. Religion meant something with Paul; something with Jesus; what does it mean with us? A divine life from infancy to age; divine all through? Oh, no; a cheaper thing than that; it means talk, creed-making, and

creed-believing, and creed-defending. We Christians of the "nineteenth century," have many "inventions to save labor;" among them a process by which "a man is made as good a Christian in five minutes as in fifty years." Behold Christianity made easy! Do men love religion and its divine life, as gain and trade? Is it the great moving principle with us; something loved for itself; something to live by? Oh, no. Nobody pretends it.

No wonder "ministers cannot bear to hear the truth spoken;" five minutes' talk will not weigh down fifty years' work, save in the Church's balance. The Christianity of the Churches stands at the corner of the street, and bellows till all rings again from Cape Sable to the Lake of the Woods, if a single "heretic" lifts up his voice, though never so weak, in the obscurest corner of the earth; but Giant Sin may go through the land with his hideous rout; may ride rough-shod over the poor, and burn the standing corn and poison the waters of the nation, and shake the very Church till the steeple rock — and there shall not a dog wag his tongue. When did the Christianity of the churches leave a heresy unscathed; when did it ever denounce a popular sin — the desolation of intemperance, our butchery of the Indians, the soul-destroying traffic in the flesh and blood of men "for whom Christ died?" These things need no comment. They tell their own tale. Where is the infidelity of this age? Read the sectarian newspapers. We have a theological religion to defend with tracts, sermons, ministers, and scandal. It needs all that to defend it.

No wonder young men, and young women too, of the most spiritual stamp, lose their reverence for the Church, or come into it only for a slumber, irresistible,

profound, and strangely similar to death. What concord hath freedom with slavery? Talent goes to the world, not the churches. No wonder unbelief scoffs in the public print, "beside what that grim wolf, with privy paw, daily devours apace, and nothing said;" there is an unbelief, worse than the public scoffing, though more secret, which needs not be spoken of. No wonder the old cry is raised, "The Church in danger," as its crazy timbers sway to and fro if a strong man treads its floors. But what then? What is true never fails. Religion is permanent in the race; Christianity everlasting as God. These can never perish, through the treachery of their defenders, or the violence of their foes. We look round us, and all seems to change; what was solid last night, is fluid and passed off to-day; the theology of our fathers is unreadable; the doctrines of the middle-age "divines" is deceased like them. Shall our mountain stand? "Everywhere is instability and insecurity." It is only men's heads that swim; not the stars that run round. The soul of man remains the same; Absolute Religion does not change; God still speaks in mind and conscience, heart and soul; is still immanent in his children. We need no new forms; the old, Baptism and the Supper, are still beautiful to many a man, and speak blessed words of religious significance. Let them continue for such as need them. We want real Christianity, the absolute religion, preached with faith and applied to life; Being Good and Doing Good. There is but one real religion; we need only open our eyes to see that; only live it, in love to God, and love to man, and we are blest of Him that liveth forever and ever.

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